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THE

CHRISTIAN LIFE;

ITS HOPES, ITS FEARS, AND ITS CLOSE.

BY

THOMAS ARNOLD, D.D.,
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AND LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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THE

CHRISTIAN LIFE.

LECTURE I.

SUDDEN DEATH.

1 CORINTHIANS, xv. 6.

The greater part remain until this present, but some are fallen asleep.

I BELIEVE that I have never spoken to you from this place immediately before our separations for the holidays, without feeling and expressing to you the solemn circumstance, that we who were so met together should never be assembled all together again. It is likely, indeed, that the same may be the case with any other congregation, if we go into it very strictly: it is possible that exactly the same persons, with none added to them and none wanting, may never be assembled twice in the same church in any parish in England. But we cannot, in any parish church, fix on any number of persons and say that they will never meet each other in that same congregation again; or that if any of them are there again, the bulk of the congregation will surely be different; whereas here at the end of every half-year we know this to be the case. We know that it is next to an impossibility that even the majority

of those who are leaving us should ever happen to return here at the same time;—we know that very few of them are likely to return so soon, as not to find a remarkable change in the faces around them when they do return; and therefore those last Sundays of our half-year are always, to my mind, striking periods; they seem marked moments in the lives of those whom I am addressing, and so naturally do we see our own state in the lives of others, that they seem, also, even to the older part of our audience, times full of interest and warning.

This is natural, considering even no more than the usual course of events, and thinking merely of your approaching departure from school. On any thing farther I have generally forborne to dwell; because it seems better to insist upon what will certainly happen, than on what may happen possibly, but which we can hardly call so much as probable. But when more has happened, when we find that our separation has not been only such as we naturally look for—that it is not only next to impossible, but utterly so, that all who were here assembled at the end of last half-year, should be ever so assembled again; when not only the trials of school have been exchanged in many instances for the trials of after life, but the state of trial is passed altogether, and the eternal portion begun; when, in short, there has occurred since we were last met, a parting not only with school but with life, then indeed our meeting here is invested with something of a more peculiar solemnity.

You are all aware of the loss which we have sustained, and of the remarkably awful circumstances which attended it. Considering how much serious sickness had prevailed amongst us just before we parted, it certainly could not have been surprising had a more violent attack of the same disorder proved in some one case fatal. Considering

also the disease which was then visiting the northern parts of the kingdom, it could not have been beyond expectation had one or two of our own number, who might be exposed to its ravages, fallen victims to it. But a death from no infectious disorder, from no exposure to an extraordinary pestilence, and where there had been no previous sickness of any kind, and no unhealthiness of natural constitution, —this it was impossible to anticipate. It is one of those instances which God mercifully sends from time to time to remind us of the folly of carnal security; that no man and no boy has a right to say to himself, "To-day or to-morrow I will go into such a city and continue there for a time, and then return to the place where I was before." Indeed, we ought to say, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that;" and not only to say so, but to bear deeply in our minds the real and important truth of what we are saying.

Sudden death is awful whenever it occurs, more awful in the case of a young man than in any other; most awful when it happens not by what is called an accident, but by a stroke so unseen, and so little to be guarded against, that it may well be called, in the language of our law, "the visitation of God." We know that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, but we do not much think about it; these cases, however, recall it to our minds most strongly, when that divine workmanship of our bodies, which has gone on year after year, silently and surely, unnoticed by us, save in the mere pleasure of feeling ourselves well and strong and active, is at once stopped by the hand that set it in motion, and stopped as silently and surely as he had at first called it into action. It is very awful to see life put out in an instant amidst the full current of its youthful vigour, and put out in such a manner

as to make it evident that it was in the very strength and liveliness of that current that the seed of death had been all the while preparing.

The shock to the body is awful; and what is it to the mind? You all know the lively spirits with which the enjoyments of home fill you; how at such seasons the hopefulness of youth is more especially called into exercise. It is the condition of your age habitually to be looking forward, to think of the pleasures which the future may have in store for you. I speak not only of mere passing pleasures, but the most manly and active minded among you must often be looking forward to the pursuits of after life, to the duties which you may be called on to perform, and to the fruit which the performance of them brings with it. And this anticipation must be the more frequent, and the more lively in proportion to your age, your characters, and to the circumstances of your friends: it will be most strongly felt by those who are nearest to actual life; whose tempers are most sanguine and their minds most opened, and whose rank and circumstances are such as to make the part which they may hope to act in the world more than commonly inviting. These feelings are, indeed, sobered by sickness: a very few days' illness, if the disease be of an alarming character, will completely overset all the airy castles that in health we are so fond of raising. It is like an eclipse, which brings on at once and prematurely the soberness and the stillness of night. But where there was not even this to sober them, where they were arrested in a moment by the consciousness of death, a consciousness which, however short may be its duration, yet probably never fails to make itself distinctly felt when our last hour is really come—it is difficult to imagine anything more awful than the contrast thus exhibited.

In both these respects then, as far as regards the effect of death on the body and on the mind, I know not how it could have come in a more awful form than it did to him whom we have lost. I need not dwell upon what must be so fresh in all our memories, how little he looked like a person who was so soon to be cut off, how fair a promise of long and brilliant and useful life both his person and his mind afforded us. I could have hardly named amongst our whole number any one with whom the thought of early death was less naturally associated. But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, and we have here brought home to us within our own knowledge, and before our sight, the truth of what we hear so often, and hear unmoved when it is at a distance,—that our life is as a vapour which appeareth for a little while and then vanishes away. It is a most solemn object brought before us in its most solemn form, as if specially appointed to serve as a lesson to us.

But you will feel that I have not, that I cannot yet have said all. I have spoken of the solemnity of death coming so suddenly and so unforeseen upon a body so young and healthful, and on a mind so active and spring-like. It is solemn to see earthly prospects so quickly cut off,—to see what was a little while ago so promising, now nothing. But the subject might have been one which, with all its solemnity, and capable, as I think it, of being made so useful to you, I yet could not have dared to touch upon. It might have been not only solemn but horrible; it might have presented a picture to which I could not have called your eyes, nor turned my own; and it is a matter of most deep joy, of most sincere and earnest thanksgiving, that it is not so.

I am sure you know what I mean. Had this stroke, so sudden as it was, fallen upon one of the same age who had

never given any signs of living in the fear of God; or, worse, who had given positive signs that he was not living in it; or one who had lived in hard-heartedness, doing ill himself, and encouraging it in others, hating good and trying to make others hate it also; on one habitually idle and selfish, neglectful of the wishes and feelings of his parents, unkind or dishonest in his dealings with his companions, false in his dealings with his teachers, and in his general conduct profane, perhaps given to drunkenness, perhaps to uncleanness; how would it have been possible to have brought before you the subject of such a person's sudden death? With the dreadful certainty of his fate so plain before us, could we have borne, would it have been good for us, to contemplate it? But thank God with me, that in the case of him who is actually gone from us, there are no such horrible considerations as these. I may not, and need not go into details; but I had the happiness of hearing such particulars of him during the short remaining period of his life after he returned home from this place, as may afford a solid ground for hope that here also God's dispensations have been full of mercy, and that in cutting off our companion so early from all the pleasures and duties of this life, He has but taken him to Himself, to be with Christ for ever safe and happy.

He is safe, but we are yet in danger; and here is the great consideration for us all. He is safe from those temptations against which we have still to struggle; and would that we all felt as we should do the blessedness of that safety; for though not yet ours, yet it may be so hereafter. We may attain to it as surely as he has reached it actually. A blessed state indeed it is, when we feel what a conflict is now hourly besetting us, and how we can never dare to rest but for a moment without

adding to our danger. Yet Christ will bring us to it in His own good time, if we bear our present struggle as becomes His soldiers, — bravely yet humbly, — striving earnestly ourselves, but with our trust not in what we can do, but in what He has done for us.

LECTURE II.

THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH.

St. Matthew, xii. 38.

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

The words are put somewhat more fully in other parts of the Gospel, where it says that they sought a sign from heaven: a sign, that is, in the sky; a bright light shining from one end of the heavens to the other, and in this light some form to be seen, some words to be spoken, which every eye and every ear must acknowledge to come from God. Send us such a sign, they said, and then we will at once believe that thou art the Christ.

In every age, and perhaps more so as the world grows older, men's hearts are apt to utter the same wish. I do not mean, of course, that we utter it when we are very busy, or when we are very much enjoying ourselves; we think and care so little about God then, that we do not desire the sky to be opened,—we neither wish to hear His voice, nor to see the brightness of His presence. But

there is a time with all of us, with all of us who are at all better than the beasts, when we are not busy; when we are not merry, and yet when we are not asleep; there is a time, in short, when we think. And there is also a time, it may come very seldom to some, yet it does come sometimes, when we think, not merely about what we have done to-day, or may be doing to-morrow, or next week, or even next year; but our thoughts go a little farther — a little farther backwards, and a little farther forwards; they go as far as the beginning of life on one side, and the end of it on the other. Our parents will remind us of the one, and our children of the other: and then when our thoughts get to things so high, there comes the wish for certain knowledge. A few years ago, we ourselves were nothing; a few years before that our parents were nothing; a few hundred years ago our country was nothing: not one town, or village, or church, or house which we see, was in existence; and going back farther still, the very hills and waters themselves were not in existence, or were in a state without form and void, such as we cannot conceive.

So, on the other side, a few years hence and we shall be gone; a few years more and our children will be gone; a few hundred years hence, and every town and house and tree which we behold will be gone also; and farther on still, as signs are not wanting to show that all earthly things are doomed to perish, there will be again neither men upon the earth, nor hills nor waters in any state that we can imagine. Is there then nothing that has lasted, and will last for ever? Is there no power which is above all these endless changes, with whom and in whom there is rest and life undying? Shall we ourselves, in whom life is now thrilling so strongly, who move and see and hear so quickly, whose thoughts range so far and so easily; shall we indeed, when a few years are past, be actually

nothing; shall our dry bones be the last part of us that shall remain in existence? Let us come to thoughts and questions like these, and then indeed we long for the sign from heaven to give or to confirm the answer. Then we cannot believe lightly, nor trust what may be no more than a fancy. The mind, afloat as it were on a sea so vast, needs, and with reason, a sure anchor. Man cannot tell us of what man has never seen. We crave for the very heaven itself to be opened; we crave to see the light in which God dwells; we crave to hear the voice of Him to whom all things are known, who can neither be deceived nor deceive.

This feeling is in its own nature nothing blameable. All belief is not deserving of the name of faith, and it is greatly against the wisdom of God to confound them. If God were to give us no answer at all when we seek for a sign from heaven, no man could be blamed for remaining in uncertainty; on the contrary, to believe a thing merely because we do not like the feeling of ignorance about it, is no better than folly. Or, again, it might have been possible that God should have given us the very exact answer we desired. He might have opened to us the unseen world; He might have chosen to make His presence and His will concerning us as manifest as He has made the sun or the stars, or the ground on which we tread, and then this would have been knowledge; we should all of us have been as sure of God's existence as of our own; we should have known heavenly things as well as we know the common earthly things of our daily living. But God, we know, has not chosen to give us this answer. There is no sign in heaven, we see Him not, neither can we see Him. It might have been the case, that we should be living in utter ignorance; that God should have given us no answer at all. Or it might have been the case, that we

should be living in perfect knowledge; that God should have given us the exact answer which we wanted. But neither of these is our actual case; we are not left in utter ignorance, nor raised to perfect knowledge. There is a state between these two, and that is properly the state of faith. There is no place for faith in entire ignorance; for to believe then, were mere idle guessing, it would not be faith, but folly. Nor, again, is there any place for faith in perfect knowledge; for knowing is something more than believing. But the place for faith is between both; when we know something, and from that something have good reason to believe something else, though we cannot be actually certain of it; when we have an answer from God, not wholly of performance, but performing part, and promising the rest. He who trusts to this answer, who puts his trust in what God has done once, as an earnest of what He will do hereafter, he is the man who neither believes blindly nor knows certainly, but who is walking as a Christian must walk, not by sight, nor yet by folly, but by that which is between the two, even by faith.

Now let us hear the answer which was given to those who sought a sign from Heaven: "There shall no sign be given them but the sign of the prophet Jonah." It is not said that no sign should be given at all, but that the particular sign which they asked for should not be given; it was to be the sign of the prophet Jonah, but not a sign in the sky. The sign of the prophet Jonah is the resurrection of our blessed Lord. So He Himself explains it: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." That Christ died and rose again from the dead, is the great work which God has wrought for our satisfaction; it is not absolutely the only sign which He has ever given; far from it; but

it is the greatest, and goes most directly to that question which we must long to have answered.

It assures us of God, that He loves us, and will love us for ever. To those who think upon it fully, it does become the real sign from heaven which was required; for it brought God into the world, and the world near to God. "He that hath seen me," said Christ, "hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"

But it is the remarkable part of this our Christian sign, that it speaks to us more and more strongly according as we are better and holier. It speaks strongly as a matter of fact to all of us: the evidence of our Lord's life and death, and resurrection, is of the same sort as that which we rest on in human matters. Whoever has heard the summing up of a judge on any great trial, will be able to understand what I mean; the jury have heard a great many witnesses; some of them have perhaps contradicted others, some have stated things very improbable; in a long cause, if the jury are unaccustomed to what are called the laws or rules of evidence, they may be utterly puzzled what to believe. But it is their business to pass a judgment in the matter, and therefore they must make up their minds one way or the other. In order to do this they are glad to listen to the summing up of the judge. He goes clearly through all the mass of evidence which seemed so contradictory and perplexing; he gives them reasons why such a witness is to be believed rather than another; how he had better means of knowing the truth, and less temptation to depart from it; how his evidence is in itself consistent when examined carefully, and has a look of truth about it; and so he shows the jury that they have very good grounds for making up their minds, and for giving their verdict. Now in this same way, the evidence of our Lord's life and death and resurrection may

be, and often has been shown to be, satisfactory; it is good according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and ten thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece, as carefully as ever judge summed up on a most important cause; I have myself done it many times over, not to persuade others, but to satisfy myself. I have been used for many years to study the history of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them; and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind, which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God has given us, that Christ died and rose again from the dead.

But where the evidence of other facts ends, that of our great sign of Christ crucified and Christ risen may be said only to begin. I might convince your understandings, as my own has been convinced long since, that the fact is proved according to the best rules of testimony; — but if our belief rest here, we do not yet know the full richness, the abundant and overflowing light of our Christian faith. The evidence of Christ's apostles, preserved to us in their writings, is very strong, very full, very irresistible; hear it fairly, and we cannot believe that Christ is not risen. But the evidence of Christ's Spirit is much more strong, more full, more penetrating our whole nature. He who has this evidence, not only believes that Christ rose, and was seen of Peter, and of the other apostles; Christ has manifested Himself to him also; he knows in whom he has believed. Life and death are no longer a great mystery, beyond which our faith dimly catches the light of resurrection; Christ is with us now, and life is clear, and death is peaceful, and resurrection is the natural end to which both lead us. There are thousands and ten thousands who

have gone through this blessed evidence also; who, doing Christ's will daily, have learnt by experience the manifold riches of His grace, who have received His Spirit, and live in a continued consciousness of His presence and His love; to whom there is no need that they should pray for the sky to be opened, that they may see and hear God. God dwelleth in them already, and they in God. The heaven is opened, and the angels of God are every hour ascending and descending on that son of man, who, through a living faith in Christ, has been adopted through Him to be a son of God. So perfectly may the sign of the Prophet Jonah, the sign of Christ's death and resurrection, be rendered to each one of us all that we could desire in the sign from heaven. It may be rendered such by our own prayers and careful living, by which we should draw near to Christ more and more. This may be done without our going out of the world; what we need is not that, but rather that we should bring Christ's Spirit into the world to us.

We need not cease to be good neighbors, good friends, loving relations, active members of society; God forbid that we should cease to be these. God forbid that we should think to bring Christ near to us by going away from our duties, that His Spirit has anything to do with the spirit of idleness, or of unkindness, or of folly. Not so in anywise, but whatever good we have or are doing, let us cherish it with all care, and do it with all diligence, only let us call in Christ, if I may so speak, to judge it, and to perfect it. To judge it, for there is no doubt that we judge of it much too highly; it seems to us so great a thing, that nothing more can be required of us; it seems so great that we may trust to it quietly for life and for death. Lay it before Christ's eyes, call Him to weigh it. He will not despise it, yet surely if such good as we commonly do were all that God required of us, where was the

need for Christ to die? He will not despise it, but if the best reward of the alms and prayers of the centurion Cornelius was, that the knowledge of Christ should be given him, and that he should be told that Christ had died for him, do we think that our regular and good lives, to use our common language, are so much better than the alms and prayers of Cornelius, that we do not need that knowledge of Christ crucified, which it pleased God to work a miracle for him to gain? Lay our good at Christ's feet, and He will tell us that it cannot abide God's judgment; but that He has paid that price which we could not pay, and that if we come to Him, and live in His faith and love, that good which we thought so much shall be multiplied a thousand-fold; and yet when it is so multiplied, we shall think far less of it than when it was little, because we shall have learnt to compare it with a truer standard, not the conduct of our neighbours, but with God's holiness and Christ's love. Then we shall be much better neighbours than we are now, much better friends, much better relations, much better members of society; for our eyes and hearts will have been filled with a better spirit: Christ will have wrought His work in us; we shall know Him as our Saviour, and His Spirit will have made us one with Him, and with His Father.

LECTURE III.

CHRIST'S THREE COMINGS.

St. Luke xviii. 8.

When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?

The Church celebrates this day the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, or in other words, His first coming upon earth. But when He came He declared that He should come once again, not to save the world, but to judge the world. We stand between these two coming, the first past, the second to come; nor is it possible for any man to dwell seriously upon the first without having his thoughts carried on to the second. For whether our thoughts of our Lord's coming in the flesh lead our minds to dwell chiefly upon our own sins or upon God's goodness, it is to Christ's second coming that we must look for receiving or escaping from the punishment of the one, and for experiencing the perfect fulfilment of the other. And it is to Christ's second coming that I would wish to direct your thoughts to-day; the more so, as there are three several meanings of this expression, all of them scriptural, and all, I think, concerning us very nearly.

Christ will come again after his resurrection in three different senses. First of all, He will come again finally, and in the highest sense, when this world shall end, and we shall all rise to judgment.

Secondly, He will come to each one of us finally, and in the highest sense, when we each of us receive his call to

die. Thirdly, He has come more than once, and I believe He will come more than once again, not finally, nor in the highest sense either to all mankind or to each individual; but in a lower sense, and affording a sort of type or image of the higher: I mean, when He comes to bring upon the whole earth, or on some one or more nations, a great season of suffering: in which the loftiness of men shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: when He sends forth one or more of his sore judgments, famine, pestilence, or war, foreign or civil, to bring down the pride of earthly greatness. In this sense, He is said to have come when He destroyed Jerusalem; in this sense, also, He came more than three hundred years afterwards, when He destroyed the empire of Rome. And thus His words to His disciples, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be done," as they were then fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, within forty years of the time when they were spoken; so they have been fulfilled at other periods of the world, and may be fulfilled to us now, even though hundreds or thousands of years may pass before His coming in the last and greatest sense of all. In truth, to all of us now living in this country, it may be said, with regard to Christ's coming, that in the highest sense of all, He may come in this generation, for we know not the times and the seasons which the Father has put in His own power;—that in the highest sense to each one of us He surely will come, inasmuch as we shall all die; and in that third sense, in which He comes to execute judgment upon some one nation or nations, He may come to us in this generation, nor are there wanting signs which make it probable that He will come.

Now, then, let us mark His own question, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith upon the earth?" And let us see what would be the answer to it, supposing

that His coming in each one of the three senses which I have spoken of, should be near, even at the doors.

May we for a moment be allowed to conceive the unspeakable awfulness of His coming in the highest sense of all? There are many now living who have seen and felt the earth shake under their feet and be rent asunder, and have seen houses and churches, and palaces, and men, and women, and children with them, swallowed up in an instant. There are those living who have seen and heard the eruptions of a volcano; when the mountain sends forth a fearful voice like thunder, when the air is darkened by the thick clouds of dust thrown up into the sky, and when the fiery stream, like the molten metal which we may have seen running red-hot in the iron furnaces, comes pouring down like a broad and deep river in flood, and sweeps everything away before it. Persons who have witnessed these scenes have always, I believe, been led to think of the great day of Christ's last coming. But the earthquake and the eruption of a volcano must be very faint images of that fearful hour when heaven and earth shall pass away; nor can any tongue of man attempt to describe what will then be witnessed. Only, if amidst darkness and storm, and earthquake and fire, we should really — we now living, we now in this place assembled — if we with our bodily eyes were to see the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and were to hear that trumpet call, at which the dead shall arise, can we, can our consciences tell us what would be our feelings at that sight and sound? Should we be filled with fear to our inmost souls, as if certain death were coming upon us, or should we look up to Him whom we beheld amidst the blessed company of His saints and angels, as to one whom we had long known, long loved, long desired to see, so that, love casting out fear, we should be full of joy amidst all the terrors of the perishing world,

because our Saviour and Redeemer was come, and our trial was over, and our perfect rest and happiness was at hand? Should we say to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us;" or should we say, rather, "Lo, this is our God! we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation?"

But this we can scarcely conceive; we cannot persuade ourselves that we shall ever see the great mountains overthrown, and the earth burning with fire, and the heavens passing away like a scroll. Well, then, let us come to what we can conceive at any rate, and ask what would be our feelings, if Christ were to come in our generation, in the lower sense of the term; if He were to visit this nation with a season of great misery, with famine, and pestilence, and war. In this land, it is true, we know but little by our own experience of any of these things; for when pestilence did visit us a few years since, it was by no means in its most fearful form, and famine and war are strangers to us altogether; yet we well know that there are many living who have seen and suffered all these things. Now, should it please God that we also should suffer them; that one or two more unfavourable seasons, added to a general depression of trade, should deepen difficulty into distress, and distress into actual starvation; that famine, as it is so apt to do, should breed pestilence; that our crowded population, so crowded for the narrow limits of our island, should increase all this misery by even worse misery of their own making; that discontent should become violence, and that tumults, and fires, and bloodshed should rage from one end of the nation to the other, as they did a few years back in France—should such a time come, when no man could tell whether he might not lie in a bloody grave before the next morning, or see those near-

est and dearest to him cut off before his eyes — should the Son of Man, I say, so come to us to judgment, would He find faith upon the earth? Should we be ready to curse God and die? Or should we, in the extremity of our fear, run away from every duty, or even take part in every crime, because we were afraid of them who can kill the body? It is a shocking thing to dwell on, but it is a truth, that in the worst times of civil bloodshed, they who have really wished to commit great crimes, have been very few, and they have been enabled to commit them only through the cowardice of the many. Or should we from seeing death all around us learn to repeat the unbeliever's language, and say, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; and when the restraint of public opinion, which now keeps us in check, was taken away, should we run greedily into all manner of evil, riot, and plunder, and blood? Or would Christ indeed find faith in us, and when He was so near us with His fearful judgments, would He be indeed precious to us? Blessed are those who, like the three men in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, walk in their souls unhurt amidst the furnace of evil times, because the Son of God is with them. Blessed are they to whom Christ's words are constantly present, and who feed on them as their bread of life where He says, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." And again, "Fear not them who can kill the body, and after that have no more than they can do. But rather fear Him who when He hath killed hath power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him!" They who do feed on Christ daily, whose trust in Him is constant, and their love to Him sincere and fervent, they indeed find Him very near in such seasons of judgment; they are drawn to Him more closely, and the work of His Spirit in their hearts is more clear and mighty.

Or, yet once again; if through our happy ignorance of such times of trouble, we cannot easily bring them before our minds as real; if we cannot fancy that in this sense, any more than in the highest sense of all, Christ will come to us in this country and in this generation, yet one sense more there is in which He will come most certainly; a sense in which we can well conceive His coming, for we have all seen it already; and when He cometh in this sense, will He find faith in us? Conceive for a moment—it is surely not very improbable—that any one of us should, within a few days, or even hours, be cut off by an accident, or be stricken with a mortal disease. Suppose the first, that in the midst of our health and strength the call of death came suddenly upon us, that by some fatal accident —and many such we know happen daily—only a few minutes should suffice to bring us from the midst of life to death and judgment. Now, our feelings in those few minutes, if sense be left to us, must be the habitual feelings of our lives: it will not be possible to change them then. If we have turned our thoughts away from God and Christ,—if we loved not to examine ourselves, and therefore left a heap of sins within us unconfessed, unrepented of, and unredeemed,—if, conscious of our unsoundness, we shrunk from the thought of death, and dreaded it whenever it came before our minds: then that fear will come upon us in the few minutes of life left to us with unutterable agony; for death, which we dreaded, is now come, and Christ, whom we sought not to know, is indeed a stranger to us. So there is death before our eyes,—but we see not Him whose help can alone take death's sting away. Or again, say that the interval be of a few days instead of a few minutes; suppose at first a slight indisposition, which neither disturbed our friends nor ourselves; then it becomes a heavier,—we are ill,—but still as we

think, in no danger; medical aid will soon restore us. But we get worse and worse, and if our senses remain, the truth becomes forced upon us, that we are in danger,—that we are in great danger;—that no human aid can do any thing for us,—that we must die. When the Son of Man so cometh, shall He find faith in us?

Again, let conscience answer, What are our feelings now? Is Christ known to us? Is He indeed our Redeemer? Do we through His grace avoid temptation, and love and follow after righteousness? Is He our daily trust, and His Spirit our daily comforter and guide? Or is His name a strange sound to us in common life, however familiar to our ears in the church; and does the thought of Him never enter our minds from morning till night? Does the fear of Him restrain us from nothing which our hearts are set to do? Does the love of Him never lead us to deny ourselves that we may do His will, and serve our brethren? Then, indeed, my brethren, if He is such a stranger to us, it is plain that we can have no faith in Him; it is idle to talk of faith or trust in one who never comes into our minds at all. And, if we have no faith in Him now, we shall have none when He cometh; the lamp is not burning in us, but gone out; and when the cry strikes our ears that the Bridegroom is coming, it will be too late to kindle it again; for while we are vainly going about to buy the oil, He comes, and they who are ready—not who hope to be ready by and by—can alone go in with Him to the marriage. But if we have faith now, if we have known and loved Him daily, and have nailed our sins to His cross, and have risen with Him in newness and holiness of living; then we need not be afraid that our faith will fail at the moment when it is going to be exchanged for sight. Awful indeed the thought must ever be, that within a few days or a few hours, we shall

see Christ face to face. It is most awful, and for a moment it must overwhelm the mind of the holiest. But that first sense of awe is only like one of our summer morning mists; it soon parts and breaks away, and then we see — I do not say the form and colours of the very mountain of God — but we see Him who is not ashamed to call us brethren, Him whom we can conceive, Him who bore and still bears our nature; Him who died even as we are going to die; Him who rose again, as we trust for His sake to rise also. We see Jesus of Nazareth, who was born as on this day, a little child, who grew up as our own children grow up through youth to manhood; who wept for human sorrows, and who could love a human friend; and who shed His most precious blood upon the cross, that we might live for ever. Then there is indeed death before us, but there is also Christ with us; He knows the way through that dark valley; it kept Him not in it a prisoner, neither did it destroy Him; but He rose again to live for evermore, and He can and will keep in perfect peace and raise to perfect glory those who have put their trust in Him.

LECTURE IV.

CHRISTIAN CONVICTION.

ROMANS xiv. 5

Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

I HAVE always thought that he who preaches to any congregation for once or twice only, without being regularly connected with it, has a peculiar difficulty in fixing upon a proper subject on which to address them. He must consider not only what is most fit for them to hear, but also what is most fit for him to say to them. Matters of the very deepest import, and the most earnest exhortations to attend them;—that is, the highest style of Christian prophesying or preaching, which consists especially in repeating the great Gospel message, "Believe and be saved;"—these, it is true, cannot be foreign to the business of any Christian minister when speaking to any of Christ's people; and yet the very depth and solemnity of them seems to befit a closer connection than that of one who is as a stranger to the congregation, who speaks to them for once, but whose own appointed line of duty lies elsewhere. Or again, if a man takes up the interpretation of Scripture, this also is not without its difficulties; for sermons on the interpretation of Scripture require to be continuous; the field is too vast for one solitary discourse upon it; and not only so, but what is said on a single occasion may be absolutely misunderstood, and may give offence, because explanations and qualifications which

would remove the offence, cannot be given along with it for want of time. There seems then no choice but to take some one particular point, not of the very deepest character, but yet important; some one point which may be sufficiently considered at one time, and on which a stranger may be allowed to speak, without assuming a deeper or nearer connection with his hearers than of right belongs to him.

Such a point seemed to me to be furnished by the words of the text, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." In our common experience of life, the need of this command of the Apostle's forces itself continually on our observation. Men are for ever acting without being fully persuaded in their own mind; and that in various ways. For instance, those who act hastily, from mere impulse or feeling, cannot be said to be fully persuaded in their own minds. Nor yet can they who act indeed on a very fixed and habitual impression, when that impression is not a reasonable one, but a mere prejudice or habit. Nor, again, are they fully persuaded in their own mind, who, although they do examine the grounds of their actions a little, yet stop too soon, and run away with an opinion only half formed, and therefore full of error. By this process we deceive ourselves very sadly, fancying that we have examined a question, and that therefore we may rest fully satisfied with our decision upon it; whereas that to which we have attained is all the while not the truth, but the most deadly enemy of truth, that is, falsehood ingeniously and plausibly supported.

Now the mischief of all this is great and manifold. It makes men either, as so many are, wholly without depth and earnestness — living and acting as it were quite at random, and without an interest in anything but their own comfort or enjoyment; or else it makes them obstinate and

unjust, persisting doggedly in their own ways and their own notions, without being able to render the least reason for either; or, lastly, again, it makes them insincere and sophistical, beguiling themselves and others with a show of reason, attacking other men's opinions and maintaining their own, yet never having gone far enough to arrive at the rest and thorough satisfaction with which the mind welcomes at last, not the silencing of an adversary, or the detection of a blunder, but the discovery of a positive and fruitful truth.

This would probably be allowed to be true; but looking at the great mass of mankind, and considering their natural powers and their opportunities of improving them, how is the evil ever to be removed; and confining ourselves only to its two most common forms, how can men in general avoid one or other of these two faults: the being, on the one hand, thoroughly unsettled and thoughtless, living by impulse, and embracing no opinion earnestly; or else, the becoming prejudiced and obstinate, and therewith, as almost necessarily happens, unjust and uncharitable, not firm in truth, but perversely resolute in error?

It is evident that there must be, if we could but find it, some middle point between these two; where men could be fixed and earnest, yet not obstinate or unreasonable; having opinions and principles dear to them as their very life's blood, and yet being all the while fair and teachable, ready to hear and to be convinced, and to make all just allowance for others. And this state would be his and his only, who, according to the Apostle's words, were to be fully persuaded in his own mind. How then is this state to be attained to by persons in general; by those who are endowed neither with extraordinary faculties nor extraordinary opportunity? Is it merely a mockery to tell a poor man, or a very busy man, that he should be

fully persuaded in his own mind? Must such an one, by the very necessity of his condition, be always either careless or obstinate; believing nothing at all deeply, or nothing at all fairly or reasonably?

But before we try to answer this question, we must allow and fully submit to one thing, which applies to every one of us. When we speak of being fully persuaded every man in his own mind, we must be well aware that there are a great many points on which to be so persuaded is altogether impossible; ignorant we are, and ignorant we must continue to be. To the most learned man that ever lived, the volume containing what he did not know would have been far larger than the volume of what he did know; and besides those many things which none of us know, each one of us must be ignorant of a great many others also, which other men, not all, but some other men, may know very well. One man's common business or trade is a mystery to another man; if we understand our own calling well, yet that calling is but one out of a great number, and of other callings we are mostly ignorant. We must therefore be quite contented not to be fully persuaded about a great many things; or rather to be fully persuaded of one thing only about them, that we do not understand them and cannot judge of them.

This is inevitable, nor is it to be murmured at. Thousands of things exist unknown to us so much as by name; thousands more exist with which we have and shall have to the end of our lives no concern at all. We do not want therefore to be fully persuaded about them; we have nothing whatever to do with them. But the great point is, to be fully persuaded about that with which we have to do. Something, many things, we must do daily; with many things we are concerned nearly continually. We do not care to be fully persuaded about all things; it is

impossible, it is not needful; but where we must act, there it is that we desire to act upon a reasonable conviction; that we may not be like mere machines, whose spring of action comes to them from without; that we may not act from hasty impulse or from blind habit, but in the faith and fear of God, doing what we believe to be His will.

So then where men choose to remain in ignorance, they are bound also not to act at all. I will not undertake to determine what things there are which may be left unknown, and who are the persons that may so leave them. But many cases there are in which a man may well be justified for leaving a whole subject unstudied, when it has no necessary claim upon his attention. This may be so, I suppose, in some instances, with public affairs; there are persons who without blame may abstain altogether from studying them. But then they are bound most strictly to abstain from talking about them and acting about them. They are bound to be altogether quiet and follow their own business, and not to meddle directly or indirectly in that of which they are knowingly and by their own choice ignorant. But if a man keeps his reason and his conscience away from public affairs, how dares he let his passion or his interest take part in them? Yet the most ignorant men are very often the most violent partisans. Let them understand and believe, and then act earnestly; but to act without being fully persuaded, cannot be otherwise than sin.

But I return to what is after all the great question, how can we be fully persuaded in those matters about which we must act? Many things there are on which we cannot act. Some things on which we need not act. But, after all, our life has a business, it has manifold relations; we must speak, we must act; how can we attain that full

persuasion without which our words and our works are alike idle and alike faithless?

Now the main answer, I verily believe, is to be found in these words of the apostle James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." Even among those who do pray regularly, the prayer for wisdom does not, I suspect, form a part of their petitions. Many of us seem to have a confused notion that sense, reason, good judgment, or by whatever name we call our intellectual faculties, are quite distinct from spiritual blessings, and are things too worldly to be named in our prayers. Yet what was Solomon's choice, but "an understanding heart to judge the people?" That is, a sound and powerful mind capable of discerning the truth and the right in the line of his daily duty. Solomon's choice should be our prayer; in St. James's words, we should ask of God to give us wisdom. And as in other points of our conduct, so it is also in this; that by asking God to give us a wise and understanding heart, we confess to ourselves that our opinions and judgments are serious things, for we do not bring mere trifles before God's notice in our prayers; and that, being serious things, they demand our own serious care; that duty and sin belong to them; that as our salvation depends on our lives, so our lives depend upon our thoughts and judgments: for if we act ill because we have judged ill, and have judged ill because we took no pains to judge well, then the sin is not taken away from our act but remains in it: and the act was an act of what Scripture calls folly, the folly which sees not and regards not God. Whatever be our business in life, if we make it a part of our daily prayers to God that He will give us understanding in it; that He will assist our judgment, so that, seeing what is right and true, we may main-

tain and follow it both in word and deed; I do not doubt that such prayers will be answered, and that where we now act blindly and carelessly, according to any prevailing feeling or fancy, there we shall act upon the full persuasion of our minds, and that persuasion will be in general according to the will of God.

This will be so, I think, with a very large part of the folly of the world, the folly of mere carelessness and lightness, which acts without thinking at all. But I spoke also of another sort of folly which is too common also; the folly which acts from mere habit and prejudice, which is very obstinate in its decisions, but yet cannot be said to be fully persuaded in its own mind, because reasonable conviction has no part in it at all. Is there not a danger here lest in praying for wisdom we should fatally deceive ourselves; and having certain prejudices so fixed in us that we will not examine them, lest after prayer we should be only the more confirmed in them, as though God Himself had sanctioned them, and to doubt them were to doubt Him? And then comes that fearful state, when the very mind and conscience is defiled; when in killing God's servants we think that we are doing God service, because our self-blinded hearts have neither known the Father nor the Son, for they would not hear the Holy Spirit.

Earnest belief without prejudice, the being fully persuaded in our own mind with a reasonable conviction, so fully persuaded, that if need were we would lay down our lives for our faith; this is indeed one of the greatest blessings which God can give us. But what is he to do who craves earnestly a firm belief? For indeed to be for ever wavering in doubt is an extreme misery. What, I say, is he to do, who demands to believe, yet feeling his powers of mind to be not great, his knowledge scanty, his opportunities of increasing it few or none, cannot make

his own way through the difficulties of a question, but must either remain uncertain, or must in some measure leap to his conclusion; believing, in fact, more from the word and authority of others than from the convictions of his own mind? Can we allow that such an one is fully persuaded in his own mind as a Christian should be; or are we to tell him that faith, the greatest blessing of humanity—faith, without which none can come to God—faith, without which we cannot hold fast to Christ, is to him unattainable? A solemn question this, in which thousands are nearly concerned; and it behoves us well to see how it is to be answered.

It is manifest that this question relates principally to our opinions in matters of religion, because there we are all bound to act; and we may not stand neutral and take no part at all, as I supposed that men might in many instances lawfully do with regard to matters political. With respect to God, it is absolutely necessary that we should believe and that we should act; for he that is not with Him is against Him; he who does not worship, rebels. Act therefore we must, either as God's servants or as His enemies; we must make up our minds one way or the other. Now, many of us—might I not say all of us—have, it is hoped, made up our minds to be God's servants; yet it is certain that all of us have not come to our conclusions in the same way, nor could give the same reasons for it; and it is certain, again, that if we were to call upon all persons to satisfy themselves in the same way, we should be demanding what is utterly impossible. And thus we hear it often said tauntingly, that the mass of mankind has no reason in its belief, but believes whatever it is taught without question. Let us see how far this taunt is really to be regarded.

The religious belief of most of us rests largely indeed

on the authority of others, but it is not therefore necessarily blind. A child's belief in his parents, a pupil's belief in his teachers, is and ought to be great; but it is also reasonable, because parents naturally desire their children's good, and would neither deceive them themselves, nor send them to teachers who would deceive them. This is the foundation of our religious belief. But when we grow older, all of us in whom belief is more than a name, do confirm it by the work of our own minds. I do not say that we all confirm it in the same way; some of us may do it more fully, others less so. But all of us whose belief is more than a name, though we may not go into the question of the evidences of our religion historically and critically, yet we pray and we read our Bibles; and we find that our prayers give us strength and comfort, and we see that the commands of the Bible are good, and pure, and holy, and that the truths which it teaches are such as we might conceive God to have taught, agreeing, so far as we can prove them, with our own experience, and tending, so far as we can avail ourselves of them, to our good. Our own reason sees nothing to make us question the truths in which we were brought up, but much to confirm them; and therefore we do well to abide in them.

But suppose, on the other hand, that after having been taught the truths of religion in early life, we grow up and live afterwards irreligiously; not praying, not reading the Scriptures, in no way testing the truth of our early instruction by perceiving its blessed fruits in our hearts and lives, nor yet examining into its foundations critically and learnedly; but yet retaining a respect for it from old habit, and showing this respect most, as such persons are apt to do, by a great bitterness against those who, we are told, dispute its authority; then such a belief does not deserve the name of faith; such an one is not fully per-

suaded in his own mind; his opinions are but a prejudice retained blindly and unprofitably; and because they are held so blindly, and without that real sympathy and sanction of our own hearts which makes them reasonable, they are called in the Scriptures by no better name than hypocrisy and unbelief.

It is not necessary then to be a learned man, or a man of much leisure, in order to have a belief in Christ which may truly be called reasonable, and the full persuasion of our own minds. The unlearned can discern between good and evil, they can distinguish between a work of God and a work of Satan. They have the same evidence which persuaded, not unreasonably, the Samaritans mentioned in the Gospel. First of all it is said, they believed for the saying of the woman which testified, "He told me all that ever I did." They believed at first on the authority of another, just as we believe, in the first instance, on the authority of our parents and teachers. But when Christ had stayed with them two days, and had talked with them, and talked with them only, for it does not appear that He worked any miracle there, then they said unto the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." So may we say when we are grown up, and so ought we to say, "Now we believe, not because of our parents' or teachers' saying, for we have heard Him ourselves; we hold His recorded words in our hands, perfect in wisdom, perfect in goodness, we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

Thus far in that Christian faith which is the daily guide and support of our lives, our own hearts and minds and experience do confirm our early teaching; and our belief in Christ and Christ's promises so felt, is not the mere fruit

of habit or prejudice, but is a full and reasonable persuasion of our own minds. But there are other opinions connected with religion, and which we may perhaps have learnt from the teaching of others, to which neither our own hearts nor lives can bear testimony; because they are not things bearing manifestly upon them the mark of holiness and wisdom; neither will our conformity to them, if they are matters of practice at all, which is not always the case, make us plainly the better or the happier. And farther, we may know that some, and these not men of clear and open wickedness, like the most of those who deny God and Christ altogether, but good men, and men who confess God and Christ as earnestly as we do, — that some, perhaps that many, good men, do not believe according to our teaching, but believe something quite opposite to it. What is to be said in this case of the belief of him who holds by that which he was himself taught, although neither his intellect nor his conscience confirm this teaching, (I do not mean that they deny it, but that they are neutral respecting it,) and although he knows that this teaching is disputed and denied by some whom he can neither deny to be Christians, nor yet good Christians? Is this the reasonable persuasion of our own minds, or is it a belief resting only on habit or prejudice? Should we retain it or cast it off?

The answer to this question turns upon the fact, that the opinions to which I have been alluding cannot have their plain confirmation or denial in the witnesses of our consciences and lives; we cannot say, on the one side, that he who affirms them, affirms them clearly by the Holy Spirit, nor that he who denies them, is thereby blaspheming the Holy Ghost. And therefore a greater degree of indifference is allowable concerning them: we need not inquire so earnestly, as for life and death, whether they

are to be believed with all our hearts or no; we may acquiesce in what we have been told, if we have no opportunity of satisfying ourselves as to its truth or falsehood. But how infinite is the difference between merely acquiescing in a thing, that is, not disputing it, and actively believing it! Above all, how enormous is the difference of feeling which it becomes us to entertain towards those on the opposite side. What we may without sin acquiesce in because we were so taught, another may equally without sin dispute because he was so taught. Here indeed the Apostle's command applies: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth, yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." Do not dispute your own teaching, but do not condemn another for disputing that which you yourself cannot properly be said to believe; for your own mind and conscience has passed no judgment upon it: till it be a part of your own faith, how can you require that it should be a part of your neighbour's? Nothing seems to me more clear, than that on points which we have not ourselves examined, but are content to follow — for it cannot be called believing — the teaching of our youth or the opinions of our own church or sect, we are bound to exercise the fullest charity towards those who are of different opinions. For if to deny these opinions be sin, then it must be sin in us not to believe them; and believe them we do not, and cannot, so long as our own minds and consciences give no testimony concerning them: while the very fact of there being some who dispute them, and these good men, shows that they are not points to be clearly taken for granted because no sane mind doubts them.

Nothing would seem to be clearer, than that, whatever else we may be allowed to do on the mere authority of others, we have no right to hate or to condemn our neigh-

bours. If a man says, I cannot judge about these matters, I cannot inquire into them, but I am content to follow what I have been taught, then why does he act as if he had judged and decided upon a full and fair judgment? And yet we find people continually who condemn their neighbours strongly, and are indeed very violent religious partizans, when by their own confession they know nothing of the matter beyond a mere blind following their own teachers and their own party. This is surely, if ever there was in the world, such a trusting in man and man's authority as God has pronounced to be accursed.

This is not a little matter to dwell upon. If none were vehement for a truth but those who themselves believed it in their hearts, and loved it, and had derived fruit from it, how few would there be in the world who would keep up party or sectarian feelings, or who would be bitter against their neighbours! The wisdom that is from above, says St. James, is peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. And it was well and wisely said by Augustine, that they were most likely to be uncharitable towards error who had never learned by their own experience how hard it was to arrive at truth. They who are so happy as to have arrived at truth, whose hearts and minds have been opened to receive the wisdom which is from God, they know how many are the ways to error on either side; how truth is for ever mixed with error, and error with truth; and they would rather dwell thankfully on that truth which their neighbour holds, than be extreme to note his errors. They too who believe firmly and reasonably, are saved from one great temptation to violence, and that is fear. I have observed before now, that those who were by no means satisfied with the grounds of their own faith, were especially bitter against those who denied it, because, in truth, they were afraid of them, as having no security

against them but in their passion. Whereas they who stand sure in their own faith can afford to be fair and just towards their opponents, because they have nothing to fear from them, and they feel that they have not.

To sum up, then, what has been said: they who hold opinions without ever having critically examined the grounds of them are of two sorts, namely, those who have found the truth and excellence of what they were taught by their own conscience and experience, who having heard Christ's word themselves, know that He is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world, and having obeyed Him and trusted in Him, have tasted and found by experience that He is peace and joy unspeakable. And such men have a reasonable persuasion, theirs is a true Christian faith, although they may never in their lives have read a word about the evidences of Christianity, nor know anything of the critical proof of the authenticity of the Scriptures. This is one sort of persons, who, in one sense, believe without inquiry, but whose belief is not blind nor unreasonable, but reasonable and blessed. But there is another sort of persons who believe without inquiry, those, namely, who have never proved their teaching, either, because they have been careless and disobedient, or because the teaching itself related to points either not practical at all, or where the practice did not contain the proof in itself, that it was according to God and taught by God. Now all such belief, so unproved by our own hearts and practice, as well as by our understandings, is blind and good for nothing. Such belief in the main points of our Christian faith is no better than unbelief; it is altogether hypocrisy and a lie. In lesser matters it may be excused in itself, because a true and vital belief of the truths concerned may not be necessary to us, but it is only to be excused if it is accompanied with entire humility, and perfect

charity towards others, seeing that it is a mere sin to be angry with others for not believing what we do not really believe ourselves, but only do not dispute it. We may take it upon trust, so as not to question it ourselves, but not so as to condemn or be angry with those who do question it.

There is no greater error in the world than to fancy that ignorance and meekness go together; that thought and wisdom make us proud. On the contrary, thoughtfulness, which is at the bottom of all religious knowledge, is one of the greatest softeners of the human mind, not in itself indeed the same as love, yet naturally preparing the way for love. And thoughtfulness, blessed be God for it, does not depend on learning, nor is the particular portion of those who have read many books and have much leisure. Even in the busiest life, he who has no other book than his Bible, may enjoy the blessedness of thought; of such thought as leads to the highest wisdom; thought upon life and death, sin and holiness, God's promises and Christ's love. Nor do I believe that in what I have been saying this day, I have been in anywise speaking to the air, but that the serious mind will have been able to follow me, and will have been able also to judge of what has been spoken, and if true, to believe it.

But one remark I would wish to add in conclusion, for your sakes as well as for mine. I am well aware that what I have been saying is not in the strictest and fullest sense the preaching of the Gospel, and no one feels more than I do how infinitely that preaching of the Gospel transcends in value every thing else in the world. But I chose a different line, as more suitable to one not directly connected as a minister with this congregation. Even in serious conversation we do not touch upon the deepest tones of all, except where our relation is very near and

intimate; we are contented with an humbler office, — to minister, as it were, in the outer courts of truth. But for those who complain that no preaching but that of the very Gospel itself is becoming a Christian minister, or useful to Christian people, I would refer them for an answer not only to some of the books of the Old Testament, which, on their notion, we might almost strike out of our Bibles, but to a complete portion of the New Testament itself, — to the Epistle of St. James, the Lord's brother. That epistle undoubtedly supposes that they who were to read it had received other teaching beforehand; that the Gospel in the strict sense had been already preached to them. But in itself it does not in that high sense preach the Gospel; it dwells rather from beginning to end on such points of Christian duty as are required to perfect the man of God unto all good works; points which may be called properly moral. Now that some Christian preaching, in particular circumstances, should follow the model of St. James's epistle, appears to me no just matter of blame. But as St. James's epistle is in the New Testament one only out of many, and as he himself must often and earnestly have preached the Gospel in the more strict sense, although he did not do it in this one epistle, so should we, both preachers and hearers, greatly deceive and hurt ourselves, if we forgot that the proper preaching of the Gospel and the believing it is our one great business, without which, and except as founded upon it, and taking the knowledge and belief of it for granted, all other preaching is to Christians worse than unprofitable, not edifying their souls, but rather subverting them.

LECTURE V.

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

ST. LUKE xix. 45, 46, 47.

And He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves. And He taught daily in the Temple.

THIS action of our Lord's, taken in its direct and historical form, was no more than a lesson of reverence for places set apart for sacred purposes, a lesson against common profaneness. In this sense it is probably not greatly needed now; for the profanation of churches by converting them to common worldly uses is not a prevailing fault; nor, again, are our Christian churches so like the Temple at Jerusalem, nor our worship and state so like that of the Jews, as that all which was profaneness in the Temple would be profaneness if done in a church. I do not propose therefore to dwell upon our Lord's action according to this its outward and historical form, any farther than merely to say that there is undoubtedly such a sin as profaneness, and that it is shown by an irreverent treatment of places which our common feeling regards as sacred.

But ascending from the mere outward form of our Lord's act, to what may be called its spirit and meaning, we find more than one sense in which it may be taken. "Christ cleansed His temple, so do thou thy heart," is the expression of one of our best sacred poets, and the allusion

is quite allowable and just. For the heart of every Christian is properly God's temple, where every evil thought is a profanation against the Holy Spirit abiding in us. In this respect, how continually is God's house of prayer changed into a den of thieves; how often does the din of all evil passions drown the offering of prayer and praise, which the Christian within the temple of his heart should continually offer!

Yet neither is this the sense of our Lord's action on which I purpose now to dwell. I shall not speak of profaneness committed against His temples of brick and stone made by men's hands, nor yet of profaneness committed against His most inward and spiritual temple—the redeemed soul of each particular Christian, in which the Holy Spirit dwells. There is a third sort of Christian temple, which may be and is profaned daily; not a temple of brick and stone, nor yet the single soul of an individual man, but a Christian society formed for God's glory, and consecrated by God's presence; for wheresoever, says Christ, "two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." In this sense the whole Christian church is called the temple of God, and sinfulness in the church is especially a profanation of God's holy temple.

But yet neither am I going to speak of this sort of profaneness. What the whole Christian church is in general, that all particular churches are separately: and that too are all Christian societies formed for some good and Christian end. We here assembled are undoubtedly such a temple. I speak not of this particular building in which we meet for divine worship, nor do I speak of our own individual souls, although they too are each God's temple, and are each continually profaned; but I speak of us as a society, as a school, as a Christian school, as a place, that

is, to which the sons of Christian parents, and of no other, are sent to receive a Christian education. Such a society is beyond all doubt in its idea or institution a temple of God; God's blessing is upon it, Christ and Christ's Spirit dwell in the midst of it.

I say that such a society is *in its idea or institution* God's temple. And so only are we each individually God's temple, so only is the church itself. The temple may be in fact profaned, the service of God in it may in fact be not only interrupted but utterly done away: God who dwelt in it may have been so grieved with the profanations done in it, as to depart from it altogether. This may be the case with individual Christians, or with the church itself; and so also it may be the case with any smaller society. I assume nothing, therefore, as to our actual state; I do not say whether the profanation done here is much or little, but I say, that considered as a Christian school, which we profess to be, we are undoubtedly a temple of God, and God is with us, and Christ is in us.

Now that Jewish temple, from which our Lord drove out the buyers and sellers, was as we know in its outward appearance most magnificent and imposing. "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" was the language of the disciples as they looked with admiration on the grandeur of the fabric. But this fair and goodly building had been made no less a den of thieves. And so with us, it cannot be any thing in our outward condition, as to numbers, reputation, or such points, which can ensure our being truly, as we are in theory, and as we ought to be, a temple of God.

Every one, it is true, knows this, and every one if asked would acknowledge it. But yet it is true, also, that we are all apt to be dazzled by any outward prosperity; that we are apt to be proud of our numbers and reputation, and

perhaps to relax our anxiety, as if we thought that our care were under such circumstances less needed. Whereas in fact it never was or could be more needed; and the sense of outward prosperity is most naturally accompanied in every thinking mind, not by exultation, but by humiliation and fear.

There is, however, in a Christian a better feeling even than this just and godly fear; and that is, a lively and a godly zeal. Prosperity, whilst it strikes us with awe, may and ought also to encourage us to greater exertions. It is very fearful to think of the sin and the shame of letting this temple of God be profaned, of letting it be so overrun with evil that from a house of prayer it should have become a den of thieves. But, is it not also an enkindling and encouraging thought, to dwell on the blessing of not suffering it to be so profaned; of driving out in Christ's power the evil that would most corrupt us; of being indeed a temple of God, wherein his praise should be not only spoken with our lips, but acted in our lives?

I think that this is very encouraging and enkindling to every one who wishes to serve God. But by "encouraging and enkindling," I mean of course, encouraging and enkindling to exertion. It is but folly to say, "How delightful would it be if it were so!" and not rather to say, "This is indeed so glorious and blessed a thing, that I will labour heart and soul that it shall be so."

I well know that such labour becomes us, the older part of our society, most of all, and that our sin is the heaviest of all if we neglect it. But it is no less true that you have your share in the work also, and that more depends upon you than upon us. Nor is your sin light if you neglect it; I mean that every one of you has a duty to perform towards the school, and that over and above the sin of his own particular faults, he incurs a sin, I think even

greater, by encouraging faults, or discouraging good in others; and farther still, that he incurs a sin, less I grant than in the last case, but still considerable, by being altogether indifferent to the conduct of others, by doing nothing to discourage evil, nothing to encourage good.

Every one of you has such a duty, and has to beware of such a sin. And by all I fear the duty is often neglected, and the sin in some degree committed. Nor, making every allowance for the difficulties of particular cases, can ignorance, I fear, be generally pleaded as an excuse. I do not think that it is so much owing to ignorance, as to indifference and to fear; indifference about God's service,—fear of what may be said or done by man. Now it would be very easy to show on lower grounds, that such neglect is really against the good of the school, even using that term in a common worldly sense; it would be very easy to show that those who are fond of the school,—and I believe that there are a great many such,—show their regard for it in a strange way, by taking no pains to check what is evil in it. But I really am ashamed to press such grounds, when the true Christian ground is so infinitely stronger than any other to those who have been baptized into Christ's service. For if we do not acknowledge our duty to struggle against all evil everywhere and to set up Christ's service and Christ's kingdom, we do assuredly forswear the covenant of our baptism, we do deny the Lord who bought us, and shall be denied by Him before His Father and the holy angels.

Every one of you has such a duty, and has to beware of the sin of neglecting it. But as the neglect of it is worst of all in us, so it is in the next degree worst in those, who, in age and station and authority, are advanced above the rest of the school. I cannot deny, when I look round and see how many are here assembled,—I cannot deny

that the oldest and most advanced among you have an anxious duty, a duty which some might suppose was too heavy for your years. But it seems to me the nobler as well as the truer way of stating the case to say, that it is the great privilege of this and other such institutions, to anticipate the common term of manhood; that by their whole training they fit the character for manly duties at an age when under another system such duties would be impracticable; that there is not imposed on you too heavy a burden; but that you are capable of bearing without injury what to others might be a burden; and therefore to diminish your duties and lessen your responsibility, would be no kindness, but a degradation; it would be an affront to you, and to the school, — for it would either be saying that you had been incapable of benefiting from the training of a public school system, or that that training, in our particular case, had degenerated; a confession, either way, which God forbid that we should ever be obliged to make, as none could be more disgraceful.

I would say, however, a few words to another class of persons among you, to those whose station in the school is high, but yet does not invest them with actual authority, while their age is often such as to give them really an influence equal to that of those above them, or it may be superior. I will not say that these exercise an influence for evil, for such a charge can only apply to particular persons; none exercise a direct influence for evil without being in some way evil themselves; but I am sure that, as a class, they have much to answer for in standing aloof, and not discouraging evil and encouraging good. They forget that if they have not authority, they have what really amounts to the same thing; they know that they are looked up to,—that what they say and do has its effect on others; they know, in short, that they are of some

consequence and weight in the school. But being so, they cannot escape the responsibility of their position. It matters nothing that the rules of the school confer on them no direct power. One far above any school authority has given them a power, and will call them to a strict account for its exercise. We may lay no official responsibility upon you, but God does. He has given you a talent which it is your sin to waste, or to lay by unimproved. And as it is most certain that you have an influence and power, and you well know it; so remember that where there is power, there is ever a duty attached to it;—if you can influence others,—as beyond all doubt you can, and do influence them daily,—if you do not influence them against evil and for good, you are wasting the talent entrusted to you, and sinning against God.

Again, I will speak to those who are yet younger, whose age and station in the school confer on them, it may be, no general influence. But see whether you too have not your influence, and whether you also do not sin often by neglecting it or misusing it. By whom is it that new boys are for the most part corrupted? Not certainly by those much above them in the school, but necessarily by their own immediate companions. By whom are they laughed at for their conscientiousness, or reviled and annoyed for their knowledge or their diligence? Not certainly by those at or near the head of the school, but by those of their own age and form. To whose annoyance does many a new boy owe the wretchedness of his life here? To whose influence and example has he owed the corruption of his practice, and of his principles,—his ruin here and for ever. Is it not to those nearly of his own age, with whom he is most led to associate? And can boys say that they have no influence, when they influence so notoriously the comfort and character of their neighbours? At this

moment particularly, when so many new boys are just come amongst us, the younger or middle-aged boys have an especial influence, and let them beware how they use it. I know not what greater sin can be committed, than the so talking, and so acting, to a new boy, as to make him ashamed of any thing good, or not ashamed of any thing evil. It matters very little what is the age of a boy who exercises an influence like this. He too has anticipated the power of more advanced years, and in like manner he has contracted their guilt, and is liable to their punishment.

And now one word for those who are newly come among us, and who form at this moment no very minute portion of our society. If they have brought here good principles and a good practice, let them beware how they suffer them to be lost. They are numerous enough not to be swallowed up at once, as it were, in the society which they have joined; there is some influence which they ought to communicate as well as one which they must receive. The evil which they find may be the most noisy and forward part of our society; let them be satisfied that it does not represent us wholly. Let them be sure that there is much good also amongst us, which would gladly league itself to theirs. Let them not lightly surrender their consciences to a few of the vilest amongst us, as if these few spoke the sentiments and acted the practice of us all.

I must pause — but how much remains to be said, if we would follow up on the one hand the process of profanation by which God's temple is made a den of thieves, — or its worthy use, when Christ teaches daily in it, and His teaching is loved and followed! Surely the contrast between such a depth and such a height would not be uninstructive,—to see what we may be for good or for evil, and then to see what we are, and this may perhaps form a subject to which I may call your attention again.

LECTURE VI.

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

ST. LUKE xix. 45, 46, 47.

And He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves. And He taught daily in the Temple.

THE subject which I began last Sunday, appeared to me to be far from exhausted by what I then said. I spoke then of the influence which might be exercised by those of almost every age amongst us. I said how much that influence might do one way or the other towards making this our temple truly a house of prayer, or towards profaning it into a den of thieves. But it seemed that we might well go farther than this, and endeavour to represent to ourselves rather more distinctly what this profanation would be on the one hand, and what would be our fit sanctification on the other hand; that every one who is at all in earnest may know what he should wish to discourage and what to encourage: where his influence should be most carefully withheld, and where it should be most vigorously exerted.

"Ye have made this house," says Christ, "a den of thieves." Let us see what would be the complete profanation of our temple, answering to this strong expression of our Lord. God forbid that I should be representing what is our actual state; it is quite enough to excite our shame

and to enkindle our exertions, if in any one point the picture to be drawn is a likeness of ourselves;—if in any number of points we feel that our temple is not actually profaned; but its due honour neglected, and thus the work of profanation in some sort begun.

Now when I speak of the complete profanation of our temple, or in other words of the complete perversion and corruption of a Christian school, it will be fit only to consider such a corruption as is clearly within the limits of possibility. There is a degree of badness which it is useless to notice, because no school could ever arrive at it: before it became so utterly evil, it would be broken up altogether and cease to be a school. What we are concerned with is such a state of things as might possibly exist in a school for a considerable time, so that the school might go on receiving boys and doing them great harm, which in the very worst conceivable state it would not do. Thus, for instance, there are degrees of profligacy which if they ever existed at all, yet could not continue long, because they would so shock public opinion, that no boys would long be sent to a place so infamous. For practical purposes, a school is then most thoroughly corrupted, when with a great deal of vice of all sorts existing in it, there is nothing of a decided spirit of good;—so that those who are not led away into vice, have yet no example or influence before them to lead them to good or to uphold them in it, and become if not vicious in the common sense of the term, yet altogether unprincipled and unchristian.

The actual evil which may exist in a school consists, I suppose, first of all in direct sensual wickedness, such as drunkenness and other things forbidden together with drunkenness in the Scriptures. It would consist, secondly, in the systematic practice of falsehood,—when lies were told constantly by the great majority, and

tolerated by all. Thirdly, it would consist in systematic cruelty, or if cruelty be too strong a word, in the systematic annoyance of the weak and simple, so that a boy's life would be miserable unless he learnt some portion of the coarseness and spirit of persecution which he saw all around him. Fourthly, it would consist in a spirit of active disobedience,—when all authority was hated, and there was a general pleasure in breaking rules simply because they were rules. Fifthly, it would include a general idleness, when every one did as little as he possibly could, and the whole tone of the school went to cry down any attempt on the part of any one boy or more, to show anything like diligence or a wish to improve himself. Sixthly, there would be a prevailing spirit of combination in evil and of companionship; by which a boy would regard himself as more bound to his companions in ties of wickedness, than to God or his neighbour in any ties of good;—so that he would labour to conceal from his parents and from all who might check it, the evil state of things around him; considering it far better that evil should exist, than that his companions doing evil should be punished. And this accomplice spirit, this brotherhood of wickedness, is just the opposite of Christian love or charity; for as St. Paul calls charity the bond of perfectness, so this clinging of the evil to one another is the bond of wickedness; it is that without which wickedness would presently fall to pieces and perish, and which preserves it in existence and in vigour.

Let these six things exist together, and the profanation of the temple is complete,—it is become a den of thieves. Then whoever passes through such a school may undoubtedly, by God's grace, be afterwards a good man, but so far as his school years have any effect on his after life, he must be utterly ruined. An extraordinary strength of constitu-

tion, or rather a miracle of God's grace, may possibly have enabled him to breathe an air so pestilential with impunity; but although he may have escaped, thousands have perished, and the air in its own properties is merely deadly. And yet still it is conceivable that a school may exist for some years in such a state, under peculiar external circumstances. In the end, no doubt, it must either improve or be dissolved, yet it might live long enough to ruin many generations of boys submitted to its influence.

Here then is the full-grown and perfected evil, the utter profanation of the temple. I said at first, and you will not I am sure doubt it, that I was going to give no representation of our actual state; our worst enemy could not say that this picture was a likeness of what we are. Nevertheless, it concerns us to look at all the six points which I have noted; to see whether some of them do not exist among us in some degree; for it is most clear that, so far as they do exist, in however small proportions, the profanation of our temple is so far begun.

The first point which I spoke of was actual profligacy. I cannot dwell upon this, and I truly believe that I need not. Nevertheless, it may be well to consider whether there is not a distinction often taken between drinking and drunkenness, which is partly false in itself, and is productive of great mischief. It is partly false in itself, for although it is true that drinking within the bounds of sobriety escapes the sin of drunkenness, and therefore is so far innocent, yet it is no less true that drinking here, whether it be to excess or not, cannot but incur the sin of disobedience, and therefore is so far not innocent but sinful. And the distinction is productive of great mischief; for where many drink, it is quite certain that some will be drunken; it is certain also that many will acquire tastes and habits which lead, if not to actual drunkenness, yet to low and bad society, to idleness and to dissipation.

The second point which I spoke of was falsehood. I described the full-grown evil as a system where lies were told by the majority and tolerated by all. God forbid that this should be our case; but there is a state of things where lies are told by a few and tolerated by a great many; and if this were laid to our charge, I do not know that I could altogether venture to deny it. I hold it to be the vainest of all vain things to go about to establish by argument the wickedness of a lie. The sense of that wickedness is one of the most elementary feelings of the human mind; if it wants to be persuaded of its reasonableness, it is already corrupted. If a man were to ask for proof that one and one made two, we should scarcely, I think, attempt to give it him: we should rather say that his very asking for proof showed that he was either mad or an idiot. And so it is with the requiring proof of the wickedness of falsehood. In fact, no one does require proof of this: what many want is rather a sense of the great evil of wickedness in itself: they do not say, "it is not wrong to lie,"—but they say, "there is no great harm in it if it does not injure others." The mischief is in the expression "no great harm;" in saying that there is no great harm in any sin; in thinking that sin against God is little in itself, except it happen to involve harm to others. But I do not find that the lie of Ananias and Sapphira was meant to do, or could possibly do any harm to others; his lie was simply told to do himself good,—to make Peter and the church in general think better of him than he deserved;—her lie was one of those which are often regarded with most favour, for her principal object no doubt was to screen her husband from detection; the lie in the first instance was for his credit rather than hers; he had told it, and she supported it to screen him. And, doubtless, if any human relations were near and dear enough to be preferred before our duty to God, the wife might be

excused in lying for her husband. But what said Peter, or rather what said the Holy Spirit himself present in Peter, and confirming his presence by the immediate display of his power? "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out."

The third point which I noticed was cruelty, or more properly speaking, what is called in schools by a name of its own, "bullying." Here, too. I am sure that the picture does not suit our actual state; this evil is one which I am happy to believe is neither general amongst us, nor, where it does exist, does it, as I trust and think, exist in any very bad degree. Yet it does exist, undoubtedly, producing, as it ever must, much suffering, and even more evil to the mind of him who is guilty of it. Nothing more surely brutalizes any one, than the allowing himself to find pleasure in the pain or annoyances of others. It degrades and brutalizes too those who stand by and laugh at annoyance so inflicted, instead of regarding it with indignation and disgust.

Fourthly, I spoke of active disobedience; of the pleasure of breaking rules because they were rules; of disliking a thing, in fact, because we like it, or liking it because we dislike it. And here the existence of such a feeling in the heart can only be known by Him who sees the heart. But I can truly say, that regarding the school generally, I have no suspicion whatever, I have had no reason ever to suspect, that such a feeling exists amongst you. I do truly believe that from this evil, and a very mischievous evil it is, we are altogether free. I have no apprehension that you regard us as your natural enemies, whose pleasure it is to restrain and annoy you, so that you in your turn should make it your pleasure to disobey and annoy us. Yet such a state of feeling is conceivable in a school, and

therefore I thought it right to mention it as one of the evils by which schools might possibly be corrupted.

Fifthly, I spoke of general idleness; of a decided wish prevailing amongst the majority to put down all exertion and all proficiency. I need not say that I do not believe this to be the case here. Nevertheless, we cannot pretend to be wholly free from this evil; it would not be true to say that a diligent boy, desirous of improving himself, never met with any discouragement and even with annoyance. Nay, I must confess, that I have heard before now of instances of this evil which have utterly surprised me, which my own school experience had in no way prepared me to expect. I have heard, — the cases I hope are not common,—but I have heard that boys have been actually ill-used by other boys for getting above them, nay, even for showing a knowledge greater than that of most around them. I could not readily believe that a spirit so utterly paltry and vile would have dared to show itself at a public school, where mean faults at any rate are mostly discouraged. And truly a meaner or a baser spirit than is betrayed by persecuting or annoying another because he does anything better than ourselves, or because we wish ourselves to do it ill, and therefore would have no one do it well, is not easily to be met with.

I am come now to the sixth fault, the spirit of combination and companionship. And it were vain to deny that this also exists in some degree amongst us. But this spirit shows itself in so many ways, and is so widely prevalent for evil, not here only but amongst all mankind, that I would not willingly notice it so briefly as my time and limits would require if I were to enter on the subject now. I will rather reserve the consideration of this sixth evil, this bond of wickedness, for yet another occasion, when I may hope to complete the whole matter of the text.

LECTURE VII.

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

St. Luke xix. 45, 46, 47.

And He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves. And He taught daily in the Temple.

I STOPPED last Sunday after having noticed five out of the six evils by which I supposed that great schools were likely to be corrupted, and changed from the likeness of God's temple to that of a den of thieves. The sixth evil I left for separate consideration, because it appeared to require a fuller notice. And its very name, if we attend, will make it probable that it does so. I called it the spirit of combination and companionship, whereas the other evils of which I spoke were such things as idleness, falsehood, drunkenness, disobedience; names very different in their character from combination and companionship. They are very different in this, that when we speak of idleness or falsehood we mean things altogether evil, which are plainly and altogether to be avoided and abhorred; but when we speak of combination or companionship, we name things not in their own nature evil, things which have a good sense as well as a bad sense; things, therefore, not plainly and altogether, but only upon consideration and beyond a certain point to be avoided and condemned. Here, therefore, the subject must be gone into more carefully; we

must not blame indiscriminately, but opening gently, as it were, what lies in a tangled mass before us, we must so learn, if we can, to separate the evil from the good.

And if in this enquiry I go a little deeper than can be clear or interesting to all of my hearers, yet it will be well I think to do so for the sake of those among you who can certainly understand what I am going to say, and I hope will also be interested in it; for speaking to a congregation consisting of persons of such different ages, it would not be right to adapt what is said always, and in all respects, to the condition of the youngest and least thinking. What I have called the spirit of companionship, is that feeling by which we are drawn towards our equals, while we are conscious that they and we stand in a certain relation to a common superior. I mean that the feeling of companionship, as I am now taking it, implies that, besides the persons so feeling it, and who are always more or less on an equality with each other, there exists also some superior party, and that his superiority modifies the mutual feeling of the parties on an equality. Thus the feeling of companionship amongst brothers and sisters, supposes that they have all parents also, to whom they stand in another relation, and not in that of companionship; the same feeling amongst the poor supposes that they have also something to do with the rich; the same feeling amongst subjects supposes that they have a government; and if it could exist amongst all mankind towards each other as men, then it would imply the existence of God, and that he interfered in the affairs of mankind. The first element then in this sense of companionship is sympathy, a feeling that we are alike as in many other things, so also in our relation to some other party; that our hopes and fears with respect to this party are in each of us the same. And thus far the feeling is natural and quite blameless,

sympathy being a very just cause why we should be drawn together. But then this sympathy is accompanied very often with a total want of sympathy so far as regards our common superior; as we who are each other's companions have with respect to him the same hopes and fears, so we often think that he and we have not the same hopes and fears, or in other words the same interest, in any degree at all: but that his interest is one thing, and ours is the very contrary.

So that while there is a sympathy between us and our companions, there is also between us and our superior the very contrary to sympathy, we conceive ourselves placed towards him in actual opposition.

But if he too could be taken into our bond of sympathy, if we could feel that his interests and ours are also the same, no less than ours and our companions', then the feeling of companionship, if I may so speak, being extended to all our relations, would produce no harm at all, but merely good: it would then, in fact, be no other than the perfection of our nature,—perfect love.

That this general sympathy does not exist, that men do feel sympathy with their equals, and not with their superiors, or in a much less degree, has been occasioned like all our evil since the fall, partly by our own fault and partly by that of others. Partly by our own fault, inasmuch as we have been and are very slow to perceive the higher sympathies for which our nature has been formed, and rest contentedly in the lower; partly through the fault of others, inasmuch as superiors have often shown that they regarded their own interest as different from that of those below them, and therefore have themselves as it were forbidden the possibility of sympathy. Thus in the case of slavery, when masters held the language that their slaves were made for them, and that the relation be-

tween master and slave was adapted only to promote the good of the former,—what was this but saying to the slave that he could not by possibility sympathize with his master? What was it but straitening the bonds of companionship, in the worst sense of the word, between him and his fellow-slaves?

For now suppose that one slave takes his master's property, or attempts to run away from him, how can the feelings of all the other slaves help going along with him, and against their master? How can they help rejoicing in their companion's escape, and grieving at his detection? How can they help farther being disposed themselves to aid the one and to prevent the other? For their master has repelled their sympathy with him;—he has told them that his good is not their good, but that on the contrary his good exists in their suffering. How can they respect or wish to maintain such a relation; how can they but be anxious to break it?

This is natural, and so far as the master is concerned it is perfectly just. But slaves, like all other men, have another master, and that master is God. And with this heavenly Master we are properly, and except by our own fault, in perfect sympathy; our highest good is His pleasure, our evil is what He willeth not. Now where men's eyes have been opened to this highest relation of all, and have found it one of sympathy, then it comes in to soften and purify even those other relations which in themselves were wholly without sympathy; the master was taken in within the range of his slave's regard, and the slave within the range of his master's; the master saw in his slave one who was like himself Christ's freeman; the slave saw in his master one who was like himself Christ's servant; and a sympathy thus established between them, the relation became in many cases, one no longer of antipathy, but of mutual kindness and regard.

I have taken the instance of master and slave, because above all other relations of human life, it most justifies the feeling of companionship, inasmuch as the superior has put himself most entirely out of sympathy with those below him, and has most separated his good from theirs.

Yet even in this unhappy relation, the sense of sympathy in our highest relation, that with God, has, as we have seen, abated in a great degree its evil. What, then, should it do in other relations, where there is a natural sympathy between the superior and inferior, and the sympathy, if destroyed through the fault of either, is capable in its own nature of being easily restored?

Now then we may speak directly of our relation here, and of companionship amongst you. The causes of your sympathy with one another are plain. Not to speak of sameness of age, you are placed here in the same circumstances and in the same relation to us. There is much therefore to draw you to each other, and the feeling of attachment to the body to which they belong, far from being blamable in the members of a school, is on the contrary quite natural and quite proper.

But, meanwhile, what is the relation between us and you? Is it like that of master and slave, or is it, as all good earthly relations, an image, however imperfect, of the relation between us all and Christ? In itself it is clearly the latter, inasmuch as boys are sent to school by those who love them dearest, not certainly for the purpose of doing good to the master, but to do good to them. No parent would send his son to be a slave, every parent would send him to school. Thus the difference between our relation here, and that of master and slave, is in itself enormous.

Yet it is true that the feelings of each have been sometimes very similar. And how has this happened? It has

happened through the great fault either of masters or boys, or of both. In one from indolence, or passion, or imperiousness, or mercenariness;—when a man not caring about the real good of those committed to his charge, but only that their parents should think that they had received good, went about effecting his object by those methods which cost him least trouble, or which most gratified his temper. In the other, from the common lowness of human nature, which regards the indulgence of our lowest appetites to be kindness, and their restraint unkindness and injustice, so that it being a master's bounden duty in many instances to restrain these lower appetites, those to whom such appetites are all in all, think that he is continually acting against their interest, that his good is their evil; that is, that he is like a master over slaves, and that with him therefore they have no sympathy.

If then the want of sympathy between us is manifestly either our fault or yours, or that of both; if supposing us to be what we should be, and you to be what you should be, our sympathy would be complete; for indeed I know not what could be by possibility a greater good to us, a good infinite and eternal, a crown of glory such as were above all thought and hope, than that you should all attain to your highest good and be all infinitely and eternally happy; then the feeling of companionship in the bad sense among you, is an unjust and narrow feeling: it is the feeling of one sympathy only, and the being dead to others: it is the feeling of sympathy with one another, which is quite right and good, but it is the absence of sympathy with us, with whom you ought to feel it also, and with your parents, and above all, with Christ, and with God. For when you would fain screen any fault done among you, or would have any evil not put down, one sympathy alone exists among you, and that the very

lowest of all. You are alive only to each other's lowest pleasures, are interested for them, and wish to encourage them; but you are dead to each other's highest pleasures, that is, to each other's real good; you are dead to the feeling of sympathy with us, you feel not as we feel, nor as your parents feel, nor as Christ feels. You love not each other strictly speaking, but each other's evil; and you do not love any one else whom you are bound to love, and least of all, God.

This then is the evil of what I call companionship, that it is by much too narrow. I do not say cease to feel it, for it is good and natural in itself; but I say enlarge it, extend it, carry it on to its full extent; and then what by itself would tend to make us a den of thieves, when enlarged into its full proportions, makes us truly a house of prayer, God's living temple. Let companionship expand into communion. You are companions of one another, with many natural sympathies of age, of employment, of place, and of constitution of body and mind. But you are companions of us too, companions in our common work, which is your good, earthly and eternal; you are companions of all God's saints who are engaged in the same warfare; you are companions — high and most presumptuous as the word were in itself, yet God's infinite love has sanctioned it — you are companions of Him who is not ashamed to call us brethren, who bore and bears our nature, who died as we shall all die. Bear all these relationships in mind, and then, as I said, companionship is become communion, the bond of wickedness is become the bond of perfectness, we are one with each other, and with Christ, and with God. But that companionship, which now you feel so exclusively, would not become extinct even then: it would be the corruptible indeed become the incorruptible, but still it would exist in its proper essence,

the same in a manner, although changed. God approves of your being drawn to one another; He knows that many a lesson which might come in vain from older lips, is heeded when coming from the lips of a familiar friend; He knows that the mind's and soul's growth never expands so healthfully as in the society of equals; that no example of good is half so striking as that given by one whose temptations and whose strength are altogether the same as our own. God's blessing is on friendship, and the perfection of friendship exists most readily between those of equal years and similar circumstances. Earnestly do I desire to see such friendships grow up and multiply amongst you; most anxious am I that you should derive from each other a greater good than we could possibly communicate to you. I should be most thankful if any one of you, serving Christ faithfully hereafter, were to look back on his life here, and feel that the good which he had derived from us, was as nothing to that which he had acquired from the friends whom he had found amongst his schoolfellows. This would be our greatest rejoicing and glory, that others amongst your own body should have helped you on the way to eternal life, far more than we had done. Overcome us in this Christian contest, and there can be nothing so happy for yourselves,—nothing so happy for us.

LECTURE VIII.

EDUCATION AND INSTRUCTION.

ST. MATTHEW, XV. 16.

Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

THIS was said by our Lord to His own disciples when he found that His words, which had not been understood by the rest of his hearers, had not been understood by them any more than by others. That others should be ignorant was not so much to be wondered at, but that Christ's own followers should be so, was sad and strange. Yet to how many thousands of Christ's disciples of baptized Christians, in this country, might Christ's words be repeated, and unhappily with no expression of surprise! We should not say, wondering, to the great multitude of our brethren, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" but rather we should say to the few, "Have ye then been so fortunate as to gain it?"

This state of general ignorance has existed so long that it excites no surprise; in some, perhaps, it has even excited no concern. We take it as a very natural thing that many should be ignorant, as a thing indeed which can by no possibility be prevented. Some, it is true, speak a very different language, and say, "that education may be made universal, and that it is the only means of putting down crime and misery; that an educated people will be a good and happy people; therefore let us build our schools and train our schoolmasters, to set forward this blessed work

of education." Let us, indeed, by all means build our schools and train our schoolmasters; for it is a blessed work to do so; I know of few works that are more blessed. But let us see what we are doing by this, and what we may hope to do; for if we expect more fruit than the tree can possibly bear, we may be disappointed without any reason, and say, "The pains that we have bestowed on this tree are wasted,—we will bestow them on it no more."

Now to begin with the first step of all: it is perfectly possible to give to all our people the knowledge of reading and writing. This depends merely on the funds which can be raised; if we subscribe largely, there is no doubt that this much can certainly be done. These are things which every child can learn and will learn, if there be any one to teach him. And let us consider what really great things these are. Those of us who can read and write have only to think what would induce them to give up their power of doing so, were such a thing possible. We can scarcely fancy ourselves without the power of reading, any more than without the power of walking. If we were without it, we should be in a manner different beings. For to be unable to read is to be cut off from all intercourse with all those who are now, or who ever have been in the world, except the very few who can be personally present with us, and speak to us with their voices. It were indeed but a little world that we lived in, if our communion with it was limited to those who at each successive hour might happen to be in our company. A friend leaves us for a few weeks, and we cannot hear him speak to us, but by reading we can have him talking to us though absent. Again, are all the things in the world worth hearing and knowing, known by those few persons whom we may happen to meet with? Do we care actually about nothing but what our neighbours, in our common intercourse with them,

can tell us? I have not said a word of the highest uses to which reading can be turned, in the gaining a knowledge of things eternal. But even as a power for things merely human, it is so great and so precious, that we who have it would as soon part with our right hands as be without it. That is the best measure of its value; and this precious gift our money can certainly purchase for every one of our countrymen; every child above an idiot can be taught to write and to read.

I confess that as schools can certainly do thus much, if they did nothing more I should think it a blessed work to multiply them. To give our brethren so great a power, the daily source of so much pleasure, a pleasure which we cannot conceive ourselves to be without, and which nothing would tempt us to forego, does seem to be in itself a very obvious work of Christian charity. I should think that if schools did this only, they would come in the very next class of usefulness, at any rate, to hospitals, asylums for the blind, or for the deaf and dumb, or to any other charitable institutions whose objects are the most simple and the most necessary.

But we are speaking to-day of schools which profess to do much more than teach reading and writing; of schools which profess to give a religious education. Now consider what a religious education in the true sense of the word is:—it is no other than a training our children to life eternal; no other than the making them know and love God, know and abhor evil; no other than the fashioning all the parts of our nature for the very ends which God designed for them; the teaching our understandings to know the highest truth, the teaching our affections to love the highest good.

Now can our schools and schoolmasters do this, as surely as they can teach children to read and write? Can they

educate as certainly as they can instruct? If they can, then surely they must be the very greatest blessing in the whole world, — their value must be above all counting: to withhold them from any of our brethren is to withhold from him life eternal; to give them, is not only to open the door of the kingdom of heaven, but actually to lead men into it.

But what God's word itself cannot do, surely cannot be done by any subordinate institution in the Church. Christ appointed His Church to be for the edifying, that is, the improving or causing the growth of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Has the church ever, from the beginning, answered fully this glorious end to all its members; has it answered it surely and of necessity? We all but too well know and feel the answer. So neither can schools and schoolmasters surely give religious education to our children, as they can surely teach them to write and read.

And therefore he who thinks that to provide schools is to provide education, or that to provide schools where the Bible and Catechism are taught is to provide religious education, will undoubtedly be disappointed when he sees the fruit of his work. Be sure that the saving men's souls is no such easy matter; our great enemy is not so easily vanquished. It is not the subscription of some pounds or hundreds of pounds, nor the building a school-house, nor the appointing a schoolmaster, nor the filling the school with all the children in the parish, which will deliver all those children's souls from death, and mortify in them all the lusts of their evil nature, and foster and perfect all the works of the Spirit of God. Schools cannot as a matter of certainty do this, but let us see what they can do.

They can give elementary religious instruction. As

every child can be taught to read and write, so every child can be taught to say his Catechism, can be taught to know the main truths of the gospel, can be taught to say hymns. There is no doubt, I suppose, that schools can certainly compass as much as this, and this is, I think, by no means to be despised. For although we know but too well that the learning this and much more than this, is very far from saving our souls certainly or generally, yet it is no less true that without this we are much worse off, and with this much better off. It is at least giving a man a map of the road which he is going, which will keep him in the right way if he uses it. The map will not make his limbs stronger, nor his spirits firmer; he may be tired or he may be indolent, and it is of no use to him then. But suppose a man furnished with a very perfect map of a strange country, and that on his day's journey he has wasted many hours by going off his road, or by stopping to eat and to revel, and by and by the evening is coming on, and he knows not where he is, and he would fain make up for his former carelessness, and get to his journey's end before night comes on. The map, which hitherto has been carried uselessly, becomes then his guide and his best friend. So it has been known to be often with religious instruction. Neglected, like the map, while the morning was fair, and we cared not about our onward journey; when life has darkened, and troubles have come, and a man has indeed wanted light and comfort, then the instruction of his school has been known to flash upon his mind, and more especially what he has learnt in psalms and hymns, which naturally cleave the easiest to the memory. When he would turn, he has known where to turn. This has very often happened as the fruit of early religious instruction, when that instruction has been in no way accompanied with education. And therefore as all our church schools can undoubtedly

give to all the elements of religious instruction, as well as teach all to write and read, they deserve, I think, our most earnest support; and it is our part to help according to our best ability in providing every portion of the country, and every one of our countrymen, with the means of certainly obtaining so much of good.

I have said that schools can certainly give religious instruction, but that it is not certain that they will give religious education. I dwell on this distinction for two several reasons: first, because it concerns us all in our own private relations, to be aware of the enormous difference between the two; secondly, because, confounding them together, we either expect schools to educate, which very likely they will not be able to do, and then are unreasonably disappointed; or else, feeling sure that the greater good of education is not certainly to be looked for, we do not enough value the lesser good of instruction which can be given certainly, and thus do not encourage schools so much as we ought. Elementary instruction in religion as in other things, may be certainly given to all who have their common natural faculties; that is, as I said, the Catechism and hymns may be made to be learnt by heart, and the great truths of Christ's Gospel may be taught so as to be known and remembered. But even instruction, when we go beyond the elements of learning, cannot be given to all certainly; we cannot undertake to make every boy, even if we have the whole term of his boyhood and youth given us for the experiment, either a good divine, or a good scholar, or to be a master of any other kind of knowledge. This cannot be done, although, as far as instruction is concerned, schools have great means at their command, nor do other things out of school very much interfere with their efficacy. But to give a man a Christian education, is to make him love God as well as know him,

to make him have faith in Christ, as well as to have been taught the facts that He died for our sins and rose again; to make him open his heart eagerly to every impulse of the Holy Spirit, as well as to have been taught the fact as it is in the Nicene Creed, that he is the Lord and giver of spiritual life. And will mere lessons do all this, — when the course of life and all examples around, both at home and at school, with a far more mighty teaching, and one to which our natural dispositions far more readily answer, enforce the contrary? And therefore the great work of Christian education is not the direct and certain fruit of building schools and engaging schoolmasters, but something far beyond, to be compassed only by the joint efforts of all the whole church and nation, — by the schoolmaster and the parent, by the schoolfellow at school, and by the brothers and sisters at home, by the clergyman in his calling, by the landlord in his calling, by the farmer and the tradesman, by the labourer and the professional man, and the man of independent income, whether large or small, in theirs, by the queen and her ministers, by the great council of the nation in parliament; by each and all of these labouring to remove temptations to evil, to make good easier and more honoured, to confirm faith and holiness in others by their own example; in a word, to make men love and glorify their God and Saviour when they see the blessed fruits of His kingdom even here on earth. And to bring this to ourselves more closely as private persons, let us remember that if we send our children to school, although we give up their instruction to the schoolmaster, yet we cannot give up their education. Their education goes on out of school as well as in school, and very often far more vigorously. We shall see this, if we remember again that the great work of education is to make us love what is good, and therefore not only know it, but do it.

And, thus we are being educated in a manner always; that is, the people about us and the circumstances about us are constantly producing an effect upon us; they strengthen good in us, or they weaken it; they excite us to love or to dislike something, and according as that thing so loved or so disliked is good or evil, so is our education advanced or hindered. Thus, a parent's example of covetousness, or love of pleasure, or of passionate temper, or of any other fault, is very far more powerful than the schoolmaster's instructions; he uneducates much more than the schoolmaster educates. And thus while we subscribe for schools, we do in fact destroy our own work so far as by any evil or folly of our own we set an evil example instead of a good; encouraging places of religious instruction on the one hand, hindering religious education on the other.

But then will nothing less than such a general co-operation of all classes ensure the great work of Christian education; and can we look to schools in themselves as to nothing more than to places of Christian instruction, and not of education? It is most true that without such co-operation, schools, however good in themselves, can never become generally, far less universally, the effective means of Christian education. But let us observe again, that the great good of Christian instruction they will give to all; and we may add, that the far higher blessing of Christian education they will give to many. They will give it to many, and the number will be increased according as the schools become in themselves better and better. A school does its best to educate as well as to instruct, when not only does the teacher's example agree with his teaching, but when he does his endeavour to make the example and influence of the boys themselves—a far greater matter than his own—agree with it also. If he can succeed in this, his school will be to many a place of real

Christian education; it will have taught them to know Christ, and helped them to love and obey Him. And though, whilst other influences remain as they are, the example and influence of boys on each other will always be of a mixed character, partly bad as well as partly good; and although therefore a great many will go from school instructed in some degree, but not educated; yet if we multiply schools, and every one sends forth only a few who have really received the blessing of a Christian education, the few so educated by each will be a great many educated by all; and will be by God's blessing a leaven working in the mass of the meal, till, I dare not say the whole of it, but a larger and still a larger part be leavened.

LECTURE IX.

THE PRIVILEGES OF YOUTH.

ST. LUKE xii. 19.

I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

WE know well the parable from which these words are taken, and the answer which in the parable is immediately returned to them: "But God said, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" But I have not made these last words a part of my text, because, as I have often said before, no argument comes with so little force to a young mind as that which would dwell on the

possibility of early death. It is at once admitted that early death is possible, but we cannot say generally that it is probable: and the mind attends but little to what may happen, if it does not regard it as likely to happen. It is true that to some now within these walls the warning words which follow the text are applicable; it is little less than certain that some of our number will not live out all their days, and have not, although they are young, a prospect of many years before them. But certain as this is with respect to some of us, we cannot tell who these are; and each one expects that it will not be himself. And therefore the warning words which follow the text, are for God to enforce rather than man; He will no doubt say them to some of us; but to the greater part of us they will in all likelihood not be applicable. We will therefore take the text by itself, and consider the confidence of spirit with which a man says to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Again, as we have set aside the words which follow the text, so also may we set aside those which precede it. In the parable the boast is uttered by a rich man, whose ground has brought forth plenteously, and who knew not what to do with his riches. "I will pull down my barns," he says, "and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits, and my goods." This is a picture of later life than yours, and in most cases of more abundant riches. Even to those whose case this may be hereafter, the time for it is not come yet. The pride and pleasure felt in the possession of ample property; the sense that it is our own to spend it as we will; that it is already acquired, and not merely a matter of expectation; — these belong certainly to more advanced years than those of boyhood and youth, and we need not dwell upon their dangers here.

Yet the spirit of the boast contained in the text is nowhere more common than in the hearts of the young. They say to themselves as much as persons at any age, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." If we consider a little, we shall see what these goods are. First, there is the great good of time, — a young person thinks that he has this in plenty. The words, "it is too late," which sound so sadly in the ears of older men, reminding them that much enjoyment is to them utterly irrecoverable, rarely suggest themselves to the mind of the young. Whatever it be that youth desires, or would compass, it believes that it has ample time for. "Have past years been wasted, and are present years wasting? What does it signify when there is time enough before us to make all good? Yes, my soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years to come, for many years yet we shall be going up the hill of life; for many more we shall remain on its summit. With so large a store of that precious good, time, in our hands, and laid up safely for the future, we may well afford to spend some of it carelessly. Take thine ease, my soul, be merry, and play as thou wilt now; thou wilt have time to work hereafter."

This is one of the goods which youth thinks that it has laid up for itself in abundance. Another good which it feels no less sure of is health and strength. There is an age when even the soundest health will fail, and the firmest strength become decrepit. Long before this age arrives there is a time when we feel our health to be a thing uncertain, and our strength not to be unweariable. We are glad to husband both; thankful if with all our care they will hold out for the work which we wish to do. But to the young they seem inexhaustible; it is idle to bestow any care upon them; they are abundantly sufficient for enjoyment now and for work hereafter. The thought of any

plan which we wish to execute being prevented by sickness hardly ever enters the mind; let there be the means of enjoyment without us, and we never doubt that there will be the ability to enjoy within. And this gives a confidence to our views of future life, in which we indeed say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

Belonging to these two feelings, to the sense of having ample time before us, and abundant health and strength, and yet in some way to be distinguished from them, is the sense of having ample liberty; by which I mean, that our time of heavy responsibility is not yet come; that there is and ought to be a large allowance made for what we do; that folly sits on us almost becomingly; that careless words and careless deeds, proceeding out of and being the visible signs of a careless heart, will in us be neither by God nor man severely questioned; that we may, in short, give the reins to ourselves, our fancies, and our inclinations, because we are not yet old enough to be serious. And in this fancied liberty we seem to have the greatest good of all; and to speak quite confidently, and to say, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry, the laws which press so heavily on after life concern not thee; that strict inquisitor conscience, who watches so narrowly the course of every enjoyment, does not as yet call thee to thine account; go on lightly and thoughtlessly, drinking thy fill of pleasure, and not being as yet alarmed by being obliged to fear that it may be sin." So in this feeling, even more I believe than any other, youth feels itself emboldened to enjoy—with ample time, with abundant health, with little sense of responsibility; does it not say in the very words of the text, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry?"

Now the person so speaking is described in very striking words: "so is he who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." He is not rich towards God, but very poor; of those goods he has absolutely nothing. He layeth up treasure for himself of one sort, and he layeth it up largely; he says, "I am young enough, and strong enough, and free enough to enjoy plentifully; I will live for my pleasure, and pleasure I shall be sure to have." But all this treasure of which he has so much, is in no respect the true riches; when he comes to deal with God, it will purchase him nothing. And this in the parable is represented as being put to the proof immediately. "God said, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" But if his soul had not been required of him for fifty years, yet his character would have been still the same; he would have still been one "who heaped up treasure for himself, and was not rich towards God." And so this is the character of all such young persons as I have been describing: they are poor towards God, although it may be many years perhaps before their poverty is brought home to them, and they feel indeed that they are poor.

And now to how many of us here assembled does this character apply? How many are there, whose looking forward for the portion of their lives nearest before them; for all that portion, in short, be it less or more, to which they look forward at all, is completely of this kind; a looking forward to enjoyment, with a sense of security and of the absence of restraint? How many are there who feel that time is not precious to them, because they have so much of it before them; that their health will enable them to do any thing which they wish to do; that serious thoughts, however fit for other seasons of life, need be no check upon them? Therefore their looking forward is for

pleasure and not for duty; and thus whatever pleasure does not come, they think it so much loss — I had almost said, so much injury done them. Whatever they have to bear, and life will have something painful in it, even to the youngest, they bear impatiently, and almost angrily. And there is no possibility of satisfying such a spirit; for he who lives for himself and his own enjoyment, even if great troubles do not come to him, is sure to make much of little ones. There is no hardship so trifling, no privation so slight, no exertion so small, which will not seem burdensome and irksome to the temper which looks upon life as a thing to take its ease and be merry in. The common scheme of God's providence is indeed to such an one intolerable; he is for ever repining and thinking that he is hardly dealt with, and God judges him out of his own heart, and is to him more and more a harsh master, who makes the iron enter into his soul, till he would curse God and die.

But now if that rich man in the parable, whilst his riches were flowing in on him so largely, had wished and resolved to be rich towards God also, what would have been his language to his soul then? Or if any of you, so rich in the good things of youth, were also to resolve with God's grace to be rich towards God, what would be your language, the language of your hearts, whether it shapes itself into words or not? It would be a language which older men, I might almost say, might hear with envy. Youth as it too often shows itself, awakens no such feelings in older minds: the mere fact of having a long life to waste, of having a health which is turned to no good end, of being thoughtless almost like the beasts that perish, has nothing to make us wish that this lot was ours. But a young man rich towards God does half tempt us to jealousy. We have but a scanty portion of years and strength

remaining; our service to God, the works which we may hope to accomplish, cannot now be great. But to see one standing at the opening of life, with that large treasure of time and strength laid up as it were for many years, and knowing and feeling its value; with those light and sanguine spirits which will not be weighed down by the burden of life, yet burning to attempt its hardest duties:—to see, in short, one fully loaded with God's gifts, and offering them all to God's service; one full of enjoyment, yet looking on every pleasure as God's free mercy, undeserved by himself, and not to be caught at, for his appointed portion here is to work and not to enjoy;—to see one so rich for earth and heaven, might, I say, in common language, half tempt an older man to envy. But speaking more truly, it is not a sight for envy, but for the deepest joy and thankfulness, joy both of men and angels. We feel the charm of youth naturally, it cannot but awaken our interest even in itself; but when this natural interest is sanctioned by our soberest reason, when natural youth assumes, so to speak, the beauty of the spring of an eternal and a heavenly year, then it does fill us with the deepest joy; and this work of God's Spirit, far more than all those natural works, the creation of which was described in the lesson of this morning, is indeed very good. There is no more beautiful, no more blessed sight upon this earth, than a youth that is rich towards God.

But do you think that such a blessing can be gained without effort, or that God will give His highest gifts of all to those who do not ask for them? It is a great thing to become rich towards God; the fruit of many prayers and many struggles. Most false it were to deny this, most treacherous to dissemble it; but although it is a great work, yet it is one which all Christ's people can do in Christ's strength; His death has purchased for us the

power, and made our prayers for that power no longer presumptuous but acceptable. Pray in Christ's name, and as Christ's redeemed, and your prayers will not be in vain. Pray in Christ's name, and labour in Christ's name; for without Him we can do nothing. Our own resolutions will fade away as they have faded before, and only leave us the weaker for the useless effort which they cost us. But when made in Christ's strength, and fostered by our prayers in His name, they are not our fond resolutions, but Christ's effectual power; and they will be mighty to the deliverance of our souls from that spiritual poverty in which they were lying utterly destitute, and will make them rich towards God.

LECTURE X.

THE NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN EXERTION.

GENESIS vi. 12.

And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

ST. LUKE xvii. 26, 27.

As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man; they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

I HAVE brought these two passages of Scripture together for two reasons: first, because the latter explains in what the corruption of the earth mentioned in the former consisted; and secondly, because by telling us expressly that

what happened in the days of Noah will happen again, it gives to the whole account of the flood, which was read in the first lesson this afternoon, an interest beyond that of merely past history: that account represents what will have happened, not once only, but yet again, either in our days or in those days that will come after us. And as it is said also, that wherever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together; so we know that whenever and wherever there is a life led like that described in the text, it is most certainly the object of God's displeasure, and His judgment sooner or later will surely overtake it.

Now, in the first place, the statement in Genesis of the corruption of the world before the flood, is expressed in very strong language. "The wickedness of man was great in the earth." "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." One only particular feature of this corruption is given, that "the earth was filled with violence;" yet this is mentioned as forming rather a part of the general corruption than as being the whole of it. Another, and as it may seem a more prevailing part, is given by our Lord: "They were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage." Doubtless He to whom all things were known thought fit to mention this point of the evil of the whole world, because it was that very one which, resisting all improvements of civilization, perhaps even gaining strength from them, would exist in the world's latest age no less than in its earliest. The violence which prevailed before the flood is, on the contrary, the very part of the general evil which human means were most likely to restrain; and it is certain that crimes of violence, whether of nation against nation, or of private persons against one another, are less numerous

and less atrocious now than in times past; and it is very likely that they may be diminished still more in the days that may come after us. Had the violence therefore of the old world been its chief sin, we might have thought that its fate was no warning to us, as our sin in that respect is so much lighter. But when we hear our Lord's account of the sin which caused the flood, we feel at once that the same sin exists no less in us; that it exists not amongst the rich and great only, but in all ranks of human beings; that in this matter the sin of the man is in no degree greater than that of the boy.

Therefore the account of the flood concerns us even here. The sin which brought down that judgment is not a thing of the most remote antiquity, or belonging only to the great and rich; it is of our own days, it is here amongst us, it is everywhere. For what does our Lord mean, when He says, "they ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage?" He is naming, not occasional crimes which disturb society, but society's most ordinary and most necessary practices; things which are neither crimes nor sins in themselves; things which all may do and must do. It is as if He had said, "They rose in the morning, and lay down to rest at night; they went to their daily work, and were refreshed by their daily recreations; they had their hopes and their enjoyments; they lived as we are living daily." But then our Lord goes on to say, that the end of this life was, that the flood came and destroyed them all: that is, in the emphatic sense of the word death, which it bears when spoken of as God's judgment, "the end of all these things was death."

Such simply is our Lord's language, with no softening or explanation given. Yet we know that He did not mean that because men ate and drank, and married, and bought and sold, and planted and builded, that therefore

they were and would be destroyed. We have here the same sort of language which He employs on other occasions; "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep." Yet it is no sin to laugh. "Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall be hungry." Yet it is no sin to be full. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Yet Abraham, the father of the faithful, was rich; and David, the man after God's own heart, had kingly wealth, and kingly state and power also. Why then does our Lord so speak, and that not once only, or in one place, but on several occasions, as if this manner of speaking were used purposely, we cannot surely be mistaken in believing that He did speak so purposely; that He did mean us to understand that there was a natural danger in the things of which He was speaking, which if left to itself, and not earnestly struggled against, would most certainly lead to the following judgment; that he who laughed, unless he could laugh in faith, would surely weep; that he who was full, unless he carefully remembered from whom his good things came, would surely be hungry; that they who lived a peaceful, a busy, and a happy life, would be cut off from life eternal, unless they took good heed to live unto God. And further our Lord meant us to see, what experience largely shows, that the things which would take away the poison from laughter, from plenty, from a busy and enjoying life, were not things easily to be procured and at any moment,—things which all when warned of their danger would immediately procure for their safety. We say to a man when he is ill, "Unless you follow the remedies advised by your physician, you will surely die;" but we know that he will follow these remedies, and therefore we could not say practically that the natural end of sickness was death, for in practice

its end is more often recovery. And therefore when our Lord says in effect, "This peaceful and busy life will be your ruin, unless you live unto God," He knows, as seeing the hearts of all men, that the living to God is the very thing which we will not do; that although it would indeed make the cares and pleasures of life perfectly safe and blessed to us, yet that we cannot be persuaded to apply to it; and therefore He speaks as if the remedy which we will not use had no existence at all; He says that in the natural and common course of things, those who eat and drink, marry and are given in marriage, who live man's common life and no other, will one day find that the flood of God's judgment will come on them, and will surely sweep them all away.

I have endeavoured to put as strongly as possible this great truth, that no one, old or young, can save his soul by following the course of life quietly, and letting it drift him whither it will. It is the certain consequence of that fall of man, which was related in the first lesson this morning, that the course of life will quite surely, if left to itself, lead to destruction. It is not in our life here as we now live, with all its wisdom, and all its labour, and all its pleasures, to attain to life eternal. Round the tree of life there is set a fiery guard, which allows not fallen man, in his own natural course, to reach unto it. It is not like a tree standing by the way-side, so that we have only to put forth our hand as we go by, and eat and live for ever. If I were to say to you, "Do not commit such and such great crimes, do not steal, do not cheat, do not be cruel, do not be false, do not be drunken," how many of you would feel that you must go out of your way as it were to do such things; that your common life and habits and dispositions would keep you clear of them; that no great effort is needed to do so, but that if you did fall into them it

would be only in consequence of some strong temptation? And this is very true with a great many persons; they can and do avoid such sins easily; and then they think that they can with equal ease, and by following in the same way their natural disposition, attain unto the kingdom of God.

But indeed the cases are very different. Many of us will never lie, never steal, never defraud, never oppress, never be drunken; but all of us, every one here assembled, every one in all the whole world, has need alike of earnest warning, has need of effort, has need of watchfulness, has to struggle against nature, and must look out for all help to be found in earth and heaven, if he would escape that judgment which is the sure and universal portion of the mere natural life of our fallen nature. We eat and drink, work and play, and the end of these things is death; that is, their natural and appointed end, when they are followed out; meats for the belly and the belly for meats; but God will destroy both it and them.

Put this before your minds as fully as you can, and then you will see why Christ is emphatically called our Saviour and our Redeemer. He came to save that which was lost, to redeem that which was bound and captive. He came to take us out of our common nature, to tear us away from the path which we were naturally treading; to give us another nature not our own, to set us in a new way, of which the end is not death, but life. He died upon the cross, that this might be accomplished for us. He lives at the right hand of God exalted, and gives the aid of His Holy Spirit, that we each should take our own share of the gift purchased for us all; that we each should pass from death unto life; that we each should walk in the new way and be clothed with the new nature, and should be the children of God, and should therefore never die.

Therefore each of us has this great work before him;—we are living here busily, quietly, in a very even course of life, and I think I may say a happy one. But so considered, and if we add nothing else to the statement, the end of all this is death: we are dying daily, and though the process may go on for many years before it is completed, yet it is sure and uninterrupted; and when death comes, we are indeed dead for ever. Let us consider, I say, that this is the natural end of our quiet, and regular, and happy life here, as of the life of those in the old times, who ate and drank, bought and sold, planted and builded. Death is its natural end if we take it as we find it, doing its work, enjoying its pleasures, and no more. But what we have each to do is to bring Christ into this our life; to eat and drink to His glory, to work and play to His glory, and in His name: to pray to Him for His mighty aid, that He would deliver us, change us, make us one with Him in heart and soul, that we might be His people and He might be our God: to pray to Him that He would deliver us and change us,—not little things to be done, nor to be done at all by our own power, but which must be done, if the end of our course is to be life and not death:—that He would deliver us each from the bonds of sin and death; from the bonds which will not let us turn our hearts heavenward—which will not let us think on Christ or love Christ—which keep our feet in their old path, and our eyes fixed on their old objects—which, in short, fasten us eye, ear, body and soul to the world and the things which are in the world, so that we think and care for nothing besides: and that He would change us also, lest having been delivered once we should afterwards be bound again; that He would change us in this great point, that God might be to us what our own pleasure is naturally, the one great object of our desire and love; that the world in which now we see

Him not, nor hear Him, should be filled with His presence, as the temple of old was filled with glory: that so feeling God in all things present to us, we should truly eat and drink to His glory, and use the world as His work and gift, and so make it not a world which shall be burnt up and perish, but a world which shall be the step and gate of heaven, a life which shall end in life eternal.

These are the two great things which we each need, to be delivered, and to be changed; not things either of them which will or can come naturally; not things which time or chance will bring us without any effort of ours. Each of us needs them, though it may not be equally; for they who have already in part received them, who are delivered and changed from what they once were, they most certainly will not be content to rest where they are at present; they know full well how they need to be delivered more entirely, to be changed yet more perfectly. Therefore we all need to pray, and to labour for these same gifts of God; and those of us most of all who can hardly conceive what they mean; who are so bound to their pleasure, and to the world, that they cannot fancy what it is to be free; who are so wholly heedless of God in all their lives that they cannot image to themselves what it must be to be changed into His image, and to live in all things to Him and for Him.

LECTURE XI.

CHRISTIAN FASTING.

St. Luke iv. 4.

It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

Every Christian minister, after he has been engaged in his office for several years, and has seen the return of the various solemn seasons of the Church's calendar many times over, had need to remember and to call on others to remember the words which St. Paul uses to the Philippians: "To write the same things unto you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." For as the truths of our redemption are still the same, and as our nature is still the same, and the faults and dangers of one year do not differ much from those of another, so the Christian minister must unavoidably say the same, or very nearly the same things, in his preaching year after year. And when St. Paul says that to do this is to him not grievous, he means that there are causes which hinder him from feeling it to be grievous, although naturally it would be so. And naturally, no doubt, it is very irksome to be repeating only what we have said before; quite as irksome, I think, to the speaker, as it can be to the hearer. But St. Paul says, "to me indeed it is not grievous, but for you it is safe;" and the reason, probably, why he did not feel it grievous was, because he knew that for his hearers it was safe; and so we ought all to feel when we say

or hear in this place what has been in substance often said and heard before. The repetition is safe for us; that is, if we we were not so to repeat, it would be the worse for both the speaker and the hearer. I mean that if, from a dread of saying what we have said before, we try to go off to something less familiar, what follows, but that we must put the less important truth in the place of the more important, and curious questions of little real value in the place of the word of life? For what we first speak of are naturally the great truths of the Gospel; whether the season be Advent or Lent, whether the festival be Christmas-day or Easter, there is a natural course of address which presents itself for each of these occasions; there are certain duties and certain feelings which properly belong to each, and for the furtherance of which, in fact, the seasons and festivals themselves are celebrated. If we are afraid of repeating ourselves, we must in fact say something more or less foreign to the occasion; because that which the occasion most demands is the very thing which would earliest suggest itself.

And thus as we are now arrived again almost at the beginning of Lent, and the same portions of Scripture are read in the Church service which were read last year, and in the years before it, it would seem that there is no choice but to repeat from this place also the same kind of exhortation. I spoke last year of Lent as a season designed to be marked by humiliation and self-denial. I considered how far fasting was a duty of all times and all countries in its literal sense, and whether there was not at any rate a kind of fasting, or of denying ourselves in our eating and drinking, which it would be clearly good for us to practise. I said also that this denial of ourselves should be connected with relieving the wants of others; and I gave notice that during Lent a box would be set up in the chapel, and in

the several boarding-houses, to receive any sums down to the very smallest which any of you might like to save from his own indulgences, and to devote to the relief of his poorer brethren.

Now it seems to me that to say these same things over again this year ought not to be grievous, because it is indeed safe for us. If Lent was any thing last year, it is no less something now; if self-denial was a duty then, it is a duty now; and most certainly, if there was distress around us which needed relief, there is the same or even greater distress now. There are the same reasons for putting up the boxes here, and in the boarding-houses, which existed last year, and the same reasons also for asking you to give something to them, according as you may be disposed, for the sake of your brethren in part, but even more for the sake of yourselves.

But with all these reasons for saying the same things to you, there is another which makes the repetition with every successive year even more needed. All around us is wonderfully the same as it was last year, the same place, the same service, the very same aspect of outward things, even to the same lights thrown upon all around, which to those who observe them complete the resemblance of each season in one year to the same season in the year past, and seem in a manner to destroy the interval of time which has since passed, and to represent the scenes of last year actually before us. All is the same with a most complete sameness, except our several selves. But we are not the same; in some the change is more striking than in others, in some our own eyes tell us of the differeuce, and their own feelings tell it to them no less clearly; but in all of us a change has been wrought; we are not, and we cannot be, exactly such we were when this same word of exhortation was last spoken and last heard.

We are not the same by possibility. It is not in vain that a year passes over, even with the youngest. The processes of life and thought do not go on for nothing. They make us inevitably either the better or the worse, the softer or the harder. If we take no heed of them we are the worse and the harder, and if we do turn, it will be a greater labour. To those who are become harder it may be irksome to hear the same things, but let this very irksomeness be itself an exhortation to them. It is irksome because while it is old to the ears it is perfectly strange and unintelligible to the mind. But where there is a change for the better from what we were last year, the same exhortation, if I mistake not, is not irksome, for we ourselves contain within us that which will give it variety. If conscience gives us the joyful witness that we are more advanced towards God than we were last year, every topic, the repetition of which we recognise, brings before us at the same time the image of our own improvement, suggesting, perhaps, the hope also that when the season of Lent shall return again, the improvement in us may be still greater.

Therefore I would repeat in substance what I said twelve months since, about the manner of keeping Lent, to our own benefit and that of our brethren. There is a kind of fasting which can be nothing but good for us to practise. We all know that in our daily eating and drinking we eat and drink many things which we do not need, but which merely give us pleasure. I do not mean that we sin against temperance in so eating and drinking; I do not think that we do: in this as in other things, it is God's gracious will to give us not only enough for necessity, but for pleasure also. But surely, if there be such a thing as self-denial in the world, here is the fit place for its exercise; it is here that, as a discipline, it is most complete, while it cannot be

carried into absurd excesses: for of course when we speak of self-denial, we do not mean the denial of our highest self, nor yet of such things as ought to be no part of ourselves at all. For we do not call it self-denial not to commit a great crime, even though it may cost us an effort not to commit it, because the love of wickedness is no part of our proper self at all. Nor, on the other hand, is it self-denial to deny our highest self; as, for example, he whose pleasure it was to do God's will could not be said to practise self-denial, if he were to abstain from doing it. But self-denial relates to something which does belong to ourselves, but yet is not our highest property; and this especially applies to our pleasure in bodily enjoyments. This pleasure is really natural, but it does not belong to our highest nature, and it is apt to overgrow that higher nature if not restrained. This restraining it is, then, the exact business of what we call self-denial.

Now it is the manifest effect of self-denial thus understood, to increase the pleasures of the higher part of our nature. I mean as thus: — Suppose any one of us, to take the most trifling instance, denies himself some pleasure in eating and drinking, for the sake of following Christ after his measure, and doing some little good to his neighbour. We know that along with the restraint of one sort of pleasure there comes the enjoyment of a pleasure of another sort — the pleasure of feeling that, so far as that one action goes, Christ approves of us; that we are so far the children of God and at peace with God. I speak of this pleasure quite confidently as of a thing which all understand, and feel to be more delightful than any other. Beforehand, I grant, it is not so tempting as other pleasures are; and therefore, as we live so much by sight and so little by faith, we too often take the other pleasures and

pass by this. But whenever, by God's grace, we have known what it is to enjoy this, — whenever, I mean, we have denied ourselves for the sake of pleasing Christ or our brethren, — we are all agreed that no pleasure is so delightful; we never are sorry that we have chosen it; and if we do choose it often, then the sense of its happiness begins to possess us afterwards in memory, and we are led to make choice of it again. But he who never denies himself never allows himself to feel it; he knows not what it is, and does not believe in its delightfulness.

Only observe, that this highest pleasure only comes when we deny ourselves really on right motives. If any one denies himself any indulgence for the sake of gaining credit for it from men, there cannot be in him that delightful sense of being approved of by God, and having so far followed Christ; because he knows that God does not approve such a motive, nor is he following Christ when acting upon it. So it was said in the Epistle of this day, that a man might give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet be without charity. He could not give away so largely without in some sense denying himself; he must cut off some of his pleasures by doing it; but if he does it for the sake of gaining credit for his liberality, he cannot gain that highest pleasure of which I have spoken, the pleasure of having pleased God, and therefore being loved by Him. And it is my earnest wish that Lent should give you a taste of this pleasure. Therefore I do not speak of the distress which exists around us, as I might well do, because I am not asking you to give in order to procure a large sum of money for the relief of the bodily wants of our neighbours, but in order to let you know and feel what it is to deny yourselves for Christ's sake. I will explain what I mean more clearly:

if my main object was to obtain money from you for the relief of some of the poor around us, I should be glad of course to see a large sum collected, and I should not be sorry that some of you should write home to your friends to ask them to send you money for your subscription. This would be reasonable in that case, because then my chief object would be the bodily relief of the poor, and not your spiritual improvement. But now it is quite different; I ask you to give for your own sakes, that you may practise self-denial, for the sake of pleasing Christ. Therefore if any one writes home for money either beforehand in order to enable him to subscribe, or afterwards to make up to him what he has subscribed, his gift is wholly worthless; I would many times rather that it were not given. Whatever is given is absolutely thrown away for the purpose for which I desire it, if it is not so much fairly and honestly taken from your own indulgences and given to Christ. It is of no use if it be not truly your own gift, and given in the spirit of charity. Therefore let every one give as he is disposed in his heart, for God loveth a cheerful giver. Those who did give in this cheerful and self-denying spirit last year, will, I am sure, enter into what I have been saying: they will know what it was that alone made their gift of value. Most earnestly do I hope that what is given may be given in this spirit only; and then, be it much or little, I shall think that for those who have given it, it has been at least a source of blessing.

Yet one thing more must be added. Lent was, by its institution, a season of discipline; it was to make us fit to rejoice with Christ, when we celebrate His resurrection. He who magnifies himself for having adopted the discipline of self-denial, who dwells on his act with satisfaction, as a thing done, and on the strength of which he

may afterwards live the more freely, he too makes his gift, and the self-denial that may have accompanied it, not only to be of no good to himself, but to be a positive evil. The self-denial in that case is a mere cheat upon his own conscience; he has not practised it in order to learn what it is to please God and to be loved by Him, but in order to purchase, as he thinks, the right of not trying to please God afterwards; he denies his lower pleasure only for the sake of indulging it hereafter with less scruple, not at all that he may deny it again and again more easily, and may feel more and more in the place of it the pleasure of pleasing Christ. Whatever is done in Lent becomes indeed a superstition and an injury to us if it does not help us and set us forward on our way to God, and so continue to benefit us when Lent is over. Then and then only is self-denial of value, when it has taught us to know and to love the higher pleasure of pleasing God: he who has in any degree learnt this cannot surely wish to unlearn it again, to lose the little which he may have gained, and when Lent is ended, to hasten to return to the condition in which he was before it began.

LECTURE XII.

CHRISTIAN REPENTANCE.

ST. MATTHEW xxvi. 34.

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

THESE words were spoken by our Lord to Peter soon after the last supper: soon after the time when our Lord had said to Peter with the rest of the disciples, except Judas, that they were all clean. They were all clean then, yet He foresaw that in that very night one of them, and that one inferior to none of the rest in love to his Master, should deny Him. One of his disciples should deny Him, and yet that disciple was one whom He had pronounced to be clean; another of His disciples would betray Him, but of him He said, that it had been better for that man if he had never been born. Even so it is still; every day there are some of his disciples who deny Him; there are some, it is to be feared, who betray Him. Nor should we think that to deny Him can never be a sin equal, or almost equal, to that of betraying Him, for He himself has told us, that whoso shall deny Him before men, him will He also deny before His angels in heaven. Yet still the case of Peter shows that there is a denial of Him which may be forgiven, although there is also a denial of Him which will not. There is a denial of Him which may be forgiven, if we turn to Him, as Peter did, in sincere and hearty repentance. Peter went out and wept bitterly. But the

denial of Him, which seems to us a little thing, and to require no earnest repentance, is, indeed, not far from being a betrayal of Him.

What is now the difference between the two sins of which we have been speaking, between the sin of Peter and the sin of Judas? Let us see what was the difference of their general lives. We know that Peter loved our Lord sincerely, and that he followed him with a real desire to do his will. When Christ saw many of his disciples leaving Him, he said unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" And then Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life:" whereas what we know of Judas, even before his great sin, is unfavourable. He complained of the waste of the ointment when Mary poured it on our Lord's head, and said that it ought to have been given to the poor; and yet St. John says that he said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag and bare what was put therein. It is of importance to observe this, because, in fact, our particular sins take their colour from the general character of our lives. What we call a sin of infirmity, a sudden yielding to some very strong temptation, can hardly be said to exist in a man whose life is generally careless or sinful. We mean by a sin of infirmity, a sin by which the weakness of our nature is overcome against our general will, and in spite of our general carefulness; and we suppose that the temptation must have been very great, and have borne very hardly upon the real weakness of our nature, because the man's general care had strengthened his nature against common temptations, and what many would say that they could not do, he had showed, through God's grace, that he could do. But he who takes no heed at any time to strengthen his nature has no right to plead its weakness; he who is the

slave of all common temptations has no right to say that this one temptation overcame him because of its exceeding greatness. And therefore, had Judas done the very same thing which Peter did, and nothing more, yet the act in him would have been very different. It would have been less a sin of infirmity and much more wilful, because he had taken no pains to gain any spiritual strength, and therefore his weakness was not so much that of nature as of choice; it was a weakness which he had deliberately allowed to continue, and the consequences of which therefore were no longer his misfortune, but his fault.

Yet the acts of Peter and of Judas were in themselves also different. The act of Peter was done without premeditation. Assuredly, had he felt himself in any danger of denying his Lord, he would have gone away to his own home, rather than have sought admission into the palace of the high priest. He probably felt still as he had felt when he said to Jesus, "I will lay down my life for thy sake." Sad indeed it is to see that, when the actual trial came, his purpose, or rather his impulse, was changed in an instant: he sought to shelter himself amidst the crowd of safe spectators; his answer was at once, "I know not the man of whom ye speak." Still he probably would not have believed a very few moments before, that he could by possibility have given such an answer. But Judas's sin was deliberate; it had been resolved upon, not some minutes only before it was committed, but some hours, and even some days. He had gone to sleep and risen in the morning more than once, with the evil purpose in his heart; he had seen Christ, had heard Him speak, and partaken with Him of the last supper; still the purpose remained in him unmoved. Christ said to him, "What thou doest, do quickly." But even the very knowledge that Christ was

aware of his purpose did not shake him; he went out and carried it into effect.

And so after the two sins were committed, what followed in either case? One look of our Lord's recalled Peter to himself, to that very self, that better and habitual mind, which our Lord had pronounced to be clean. He went out and wept bitterly; how bitterly none can know, but those whose habitual sense of sin and of holiness has taught them to look on sin somewhat as God looks on it. And after he had thus earnestly repented, Christ, as we know, did receive him again; again He loved him, again He trusted him, again He ate and drank with him, even after he had risen from the dead. But of all this in the case of Judas we hear nothing: with him there was remorse, indeed, but not repentance; and unblessed sorrow, working an unblessed death.

Now then we here assembled are all, as Peter was, and as Judas was, Christ's disciples. We are like them too, undoubtedly, in another point, that we also sin as they sinned. But the great matter to consider is this, are our sins the sin of Peter or the sin of Judas? do we deny Christ, or do we betray him?

First, then, as I said when speaking of the two disciples, we must consider what is the general character of our lives. Are we, then, like Peter or like Judas? Do we love Christ, or do we care for him nothing? Is our habitual feeling towards Him like that of Peter? "Lord, to whom but thee shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Or is it like that of Judas, who had the bag and bare what was put therein: that is, do we care nothing for Christ except so far as in this age and country there are some worldly conveniences attached to following Him? It would be thought strange, and probably would do us harm even in a worldly point of view, if we were openly to renounce

His service. Ready as we are, none more so than the youngest amongst us, to plead our weakness as an excuse for our faults, are we of those who have any the slightest title to do so? It is most clear, as I said before, that if we never take any pains, we do not really know what we can do or what we cannot do: we have no right to talk about our weakness. We do repeatedly, it may be, things which we know to be wrong; — we say that we are sorry for it, that we wish we could be better; but to say so is no better than a falsehood, if we take no pains, if we use none of the appointed means to become better. Christ has told us to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation; adding as the reason for his command, that although the spirit is ready yet the flesh is weak. Christ knows that we are weak, and He tells us what we are to do to become strong. If we will not obey Him, and will not practise His appointed remedies, then if we remain weak, it is our own fault; it is not only the sin that dwelleth in us which doeth the evil thing, but we ourselves are habitually consenting, and make sin's work altogether our own.

Thus in fact it may be said that if we live in habitual carelessness, we make all our sins deliberate and wilful in some sense, because we knowingly reject the means of overcoming them. But it is also true, that we are very apt likewise to retain in our minds when thus careless a real purpose of doing some things which we know to be evil, and that we can go to sleep and rise in the morning, and attend our daily prayers, and perhaps even come into this very place, with the evil intention existing within us; meaning, that is, to do some particular thing, whatever it may be, of which we know full well that God would not approve. And is not this really like a betraying of Christ to His enemies? like a deliberate declaration that we will

be false to His service? Is such a state of heart one of which He could in any way pronounce as He did of his eleven apostles, that it was now clean?

Here, then, we have the difference in our states, which, making us fit or unfit to be Christ's disciples, makes us also fit or unfit to share in the communion of His true disciples the sacrament of His body and blood. Not every sin excludes us from that communion: we have seen that Peter after he had denied Christ was allowed again to be with him; that Christ ate and drank with him once more. But it was a dreadful thing for him of whom it was said, "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." Christ's betrayers cannot come to his communion without eating and drinking their own condemnation; they eat and drink the sign of that body and that blood which they are continually despising. But if there be any of us whose sin is in any degree the sin of Judas — wilful in the habit, because we are habitually careless, wilful too sometimes in the particular act, because owing to our carelessness sin does not seem exceeding sinful, and we do things therefore even advisedly which we know to be wrong, because we do not really see or know what there is contained in that word "wrong";—we do not consider that wrong is but another word for sinful, and that sin is the greatest evil in the whole world;—if there be any of us, I say, whose sin is thus in any degree like that of Judas rather than that of Peter, let us consider that as yet, in one most infinitely important point, it is not the sin of Judas; that Christ has not yet said of us that it were good for us if we had never been born; that He still calls us to repeat, and still is ready to receive us with forgiveness. But indeed we should make haste to obey His call; indeed we should press earnestly to enter into His presence, before the door shall

be shut. I am not speaking of the uncertainty of life; you know that I never lay the greatest stress on that, because it is an argument which the instinctive hope and confidence of youth will ever repel. In that sense, the door may be open for many years; yet indeed there is no less a danger, and a great danger, that if you delay to answer to Christ's call, the door of spiritual life may be shut for ever. It may be shut, not suddenly and entirely, but gradually; and so shut that although it might be still possible to enter in, yet in truth the entering in will never happen. And in this fearful sense it is but too likely that many, even of the very young, are dying daily; that by continued carelessness, sin is getting a more confirmed dominion over them; that the flesh and the world, the various enjoyments of their life now, and the various prospects of their life by and by, are more and more engrossing them in every sense and every faculty of their nature; shutting out more and more the grace of Christ. Who can entertain a doubt, that they whose lives are thus unholy and unchristian here, are likely and in point of fact do but too commonly lead lives not less unholy in the next stage of their trial, in more advanced youth and in manhood? Who can doubt, farther, that unholiness thus confirmed is apt to be strengthened yet more as life goes on, till the man is hardened altogether? Therefore the call is made to you not without reason, to listen to Christ this day, and to harden not your hearts. We call on you to take Christ's arms to strengthen your weakness; to watch and pray with Him and to Him that ye enter not into temptation. We call on you to come to Him truly and without the least reserve, to learn from His cross what a thing that sin is which you commit so carelessly; to throw aside every weight; — we each have one or many that are

weighing down our souls; — to arise and come to Him for salvation. Then indeed you will soon find how false is that excuse of weakness which now you are so apt to plead: how certainly you will be strong enough, to overcome the evil which now overcomes you, to do the good which now you cannot do. I will hope that some who have been careless will even now turn; that they will think what it is to be in some sort like to Judas, to be in any matter with a wilful heart betraying their Lord. I will hope that there will be those who, resolving to come to Christ in all sincerity, and imploring His help to cleanse every corner of their hearts, may be in His sight as clean; and being so, may, with their sins forgiven, be accepted as welcome guests at Christ's holy table, receiving from His love a full forgiveness for what is past, and effectual strength for what is to come.

LECTURE XIII.

CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE.

PSALM lxxxviii. 15, 16.

I am in misery, and like unto him that is at the point to die: even from my youth up Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind. Thy wrathful displeasure goeth over me, and the fear of Thee hath undone me.

THESE are the words of one of the Psalms appointed to be read in the service of this day. The other Psalms which we have heard read contain also much language of the same kind; language which is very familiar to us, and appears very natural in its own place, but which is infinitely remote, I imagine, from the habits of our own minds, and could not be adopted by them as their own without great insincerity. And it is to this fact that I would wish to draw your attention, as being capable of reading to us one of the most useful lessons which we could learn on this day. What is it that the Psalmist declares of himself in these words, but that God's judgments have always and habitually possessed his mind; that the fear of them has hung like a weight upon him; that even from his youth it has been present to him? Observe also the words of the Psalmist in the fortieth Psalm, which was read this morning: "My sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up; yea they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me." We cannot but see how strongly this is

expressed; we cannot but perceive that here is a feeling to which our own hearts are often strangers. Yet it is not a feeling by any means confined to the Psalmist. If we look into any books of prayers or meditations of good men, though of very different times and countries, the same feeling presents itself; we meet with expressions of sorrow and uneasiness under the consciousness of sin, as if sin were an evil no less real to them than we could conceive of some severe and continued bodily pain, the sense of which would occasionally escape from us even in our letters to others, and would at any rate be perpetually present to our own minds. And to the same purpose are all those various acts of penance and self-annoyance which have been often practised in heathen countries as well as in Christian; acts which I am not commending altogether, but which do at any rate bear testimony to a certain livelliness of conscience, to a sense that sin was neither a small nor a passing evil. Nor is it by any means true that such acts are merely to be set down to the ignorance of the times, and to the arts of those who made out of them their own profit. The particular character of the acts no doubt did arise from these causes; but all the arts of priestcraft would have been applied in vain, had there been the same indifference to sin in men's minds which there is commonly amongst us. It was because men felt the pain of an accusing conscience keenly, that they were eager to listen to any one who promised relief from it, and being ignorant, and misled by others, they mistook a false remedy very often for the true one. But they had thus much in common with the best of God's servants, that the sense of sin was exceedingly painful to them.

It is this feeling which appears to me to be so commonly wanting amongst us; wanting amongst us all, — wanting perhaps, especially amongst us here; and that for many

reasons into which I need not now enter. The fact, I suppose, cannot be denied, and if we are inclined to ask whether the fact be good or bad, whether it is well or ill that we are so little moved by a sense of our sins, this day above all others in the whole year can answer the question. I need not say, for the very youngest person can understand at once, that Christ's death shows sin to be an exceeding evil; that if Christ died for our sins, the just for the unjust, if God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, it does show, unquestionably, that what required so great a remedy could not have been so light an evil; that when we commit a fault very carelessly, and forget it almost as soon, and never trouble ourselves about the thought of it any more, we are making light of that which in God's sight is so important, that He gave His only-begotten Son to stay the mischief of it.

The feeling of thinking lightly of sin is one which belongs to our times: it is one of the evils which seem to accompany naturally what is called a state of high civilization. As all things about us are softened, so are our judgments of our own souls; as we are impatient of all inconvenience and uneasiness, so we are glad to put down the voice of conscience, or at any rate to make it speak less harshly. For our fault is not so much that conscience is blind; on the contrary, our notions of what is right and wrong are often more just than those of our fathers; we scruple at doing what they would perhaps have done; but the great difference is, that whilst conscience tells us truly what is right and wrong, yet it is so feeble in representing to us what right and wrong are, that we do not mind leaving the one undone, and doing the other. And this is especially the case here; there are things which you know to be wrong, which yet you do very frequently. Why is this, but because doing wrong does not seem to

you to be any such dreadful matter? You do it, and at the very best, if conscience speaks to you in its loudest language, you resolve not to do it again. But does it not happen that you are rather more pleased with yourselves for making such a resolution than pained with yourselves for having committed the fault? Does it ever occur to you to feel ashamed of yourselves in your own hearts for having committed a sin? Does the thought at all affect the general satisfaction with which you regard yourselves? Does it ever so haunt and pain you, that you think with any thing like pleasure or gratitude of what Christ has done for you? Do the Apostle's words ever impress you as a declaration without which you would have been in great fear and anxiety; his words, I mean, where he says that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins?" I believe that they do not present themselves to many minds at all: that they never think whether God forgives them for Christ's sake or no, because they are not anxious about His forgiveness at all, nor ever have any apprehension of His punishment.

It is no wonder then that our lives are very careless, even although we may know what is right and wrong full well. There is a farther reason for this: we all fancy, I dare say, that if we were to commit any great crime we should feel it very deeply; that we should be at once ashamed and afraid, and should be dreading God's judgments. But I doubt very much whether, with our present habits, we should not even in that case very soon bear the remembrance of our crime patiently; we should whisper to ourselves from some cause or other that we should not surely die; as it is, our faults are mostly in what we call little things; that is, in things which human law would scarcely punish at all, and which do not produce serious

worldly loss or suffering to any one. Let us suppose, for instance, that any one having been warned strictly by his parents not to run in debt, had notwithstanding done so, but to an amount which could not be supposed seriously to embarrass his friends, — it may be that it would be no inconvenience to them at all. I doubt, therefore, whether in such a case a boy would condemn himself at all, or at any rate whether the thing would produce on his mind more than the slightest impression. He would say, "It does not signify, for my friends can very well afford to pay it," which in the case supposed we will allow to be quite true. But it is manifest that all his notions of fault in such a matter relate merely to the inconvenience which his conduct may occasion to others; he probably never thinks of it at all as of a thing which God regards either one way or another. Indeed, this is the case with almost all the actions of our lives; we seem to fancy that in God's sight they are a blank; that they are things altogether too trifling for His notice; that He does not regard them at all. We look back, it may be, for a few months; even in that short time the actions of our lives are faded from our memories; what we did of evil and of good is alike forgotten. But do we believe that it will be so at the judgment; that out of our fifty or sixty or seventy years of life, only a few striking actions here and there have been recorded; some one or two great sins, some one or two good actions, and all the rest a blank? Is this indeed the judgment of Him who trieth the very hearts and reins; who will require an account of every idle word? Yesterday and all the past week, — already to us they are like a country looked over from a hill; one or two points we recognise, but all other objects are blended into one indistinct mass, of which we see nothing but its extent. Yet in God's record, yesterday contained in it some fifteen or

sixteen waking hours; in all those hours we ourselves were doing something or other; we ourselves, I say, that is our own hearts and souls; for they work not only with the hands and the feet and the tongue for instruments, but with the thoughts and with the feelings and dispositions which have not formed themselves into definite thoughts: our souls therefore were doing something in every minute of all those hours; that something was assuredly good or evil, and whether it was the one or the other, it stands and will stand recorded for ever, to be judged at the last day.

Now let me return to the instance which I was speaking of; the supposed case of a boy who had incurred a debt, not of a large amount, against the warning of his parents. I said that I believed that a boy in such a case would scarcely think that he had done any thing wrong at all, because the sum he would feel was so trifling that it could not inconvenience his friends to pay it; and he never thought of the act at all, except with reference to them. But the act was noted in God's record of the day, and it was noted undoubtedly as a sin; it was noted as a disobedience, it was noted as a want of self-restraint, it was noted as a mark of a want of care over the heart and actions, a want of an abiding faith and dutifulness towards God. It stands as all these in God's record, it stands not as an injury done to a boy's parents, but as an injury to himself; an injury to his good habits of watchfulness, of obedience, of doing all to the glory of God. It stands recorded therefore as a sin, and thus not to be forgotten before God, in whose sight sin never perishes, except so far as it is washed out by Christ's blood.

This little instance may serve to show us what there is in us which so greatly differs from God's judgment. How many actions, how many words, how many thoughts and

feelings of our lives are there which give us no concern at all, and which yet stand recorded as sins before God! Consider the wide extent of St. Paul's words, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," and then see whether I have at all exceeded their proper meaning. St. Paul says, "whatever we do carelessly and without faith in God that he approves of it is sin." It is manifest, then, that the actions of whole days and weeks, passed as they are by too many in utter carelessness, are nothing but one mass of sin; no one thing in them has been sanctified by the thought of God or of Christ. It is no exaggeration, then, but the simple truth, that our sins in such a case are more in number than the hairs of our head; and it might well be the case, that looking at all this vast number, and remembering God's judgments, our hearts, as the Psalmist says of himself, should fail us for fear.

If we would at all consider this, then our religious exercises would very soon assume a different character; our weekly services in this place, the communion on Sunday next, the confirmation a few weeks hence, would then take to our eyes their own proper importance, and would be, according to God's institution and purpose, means of grace. If we would at all consider this, the expression which to our ears is not strange, but is utterly so to our hearts, of the burden of our sins, would become to us a simple truth: sin would be a burden to us, and Christ's cross a blessed deliverance. But, so long as it is felt to be no burden, so long will Christ's cross be of necessity little valued. An hard matter, indeed, it is to quicken a dulled conscience; an hard thing to discern the evil of that sin on which all the world seems to look with indifference, while God's regard of it, clear to the eye of faith, is to other eyes invisible. This is hard, and therefore it is mentioned as one of the Holy Spirit's great works, that He should convince the

world of sin. Let us pray to Him to convince us of it particularly; to open the eyes of our souls, and to quicken their feelings; to teach us to judge ourselves in youth as well as in age, in what we call little things no less than in what we allow to be great; to stop our actions as it were on their headlong passage, and question them and make them yield us an answer. Remember that so many waking hours as we have in every day, so many hours have we of sin or of holiness: every hour delivers in and must deliver its record; and every thing so recorded is placed either on one side of the fatal line or on the other; it is charged to our great account of good or of evil. Yes, all that countless multitude of unremembered thoughts, and words and deeds, take their places distinctly, and swell the sum for condemnation or for glory. In themselves like ciphers there is a little figure to be placed before them which gives to them an infinite value; there is faith on the one hand to give them all a virtue for good, there is carelessness on the other hand to make them all count for evil. For whatsoever is not of faith is sin; but whatever is sanctified by an holy and careful general intention, is done, even though it be so common a thing as eating and drinking,—is done to the glory of God, and therefore to our own salvation through Christ Jesus.

LECTURE XIV.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY.

EXODUS xiv. 20.

The pillar of the cloud came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night.

I SPOKE on Friday of that dulness or hardness of conscience which hinders us so often from dwelling upon our own faults, or from feeling any shame or sorrow for them, and which, by a necessary consequence, hinders us also from feeling any love to Christ, any thankfulness for his death, or any joy in his resurrection. I said, that if we would throw off this dulness, and really take heed to our ways, the difference in the character of all our religious exercises would be very great, — in our prayers, at the communion, or at the confirmation; whereas nothing is more difficult than to speak of any of the great events celebrated by our Christian festivals, when our hearers are generally careless in their lives, and have no serious thoughts of their own about the matter. We know not what language to use in such a case. If we were missionaries speaking to heathens, then we might attract attention by the novelty of our preaching: we should have to relate the most wonderful thing which ever happened on the earth, and our hearers, to whom it would be no less new than wonderful, would listen with attention and with in-

terest. Or, if we spoke to a congregation of Christians really worthy of their name, there our task would be easy also: for the thoughts which our great festivals awaken would so go along with every sentence uttered, that let our words be in themselves what they would, they would fall into such good ground as to bring forth fruit abundantly. But to indifferent Christians, to those whose ears are familiar with all that can be said, while their hearts are altogether indifferent to it, what language can be used successfully? The story of Christ's death and resurrection is like a twice, or rather an hundred times told tale, which we are almost weary of hearing; whilst, on the other hand, there is no deep love for the subject, which would make the repetition of it only the more welcome.

And thus it is that Easter Day, and all the other great Christian festivals, may be likened to the pillar of the cloud described in the text; they are a cloud and a darkness to Egypt, but a light to Israel. They stand as it were between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, between those who do not belong to Christ and those who do, separating them effectually from each other: —they separate them ever more and more, helping these onwards upon their heavenly way, driving back the others, and removing them farther and farther from the love of Christ their Saviour. So it is ever, that God and his manifestations are a light, and a blessing, and a glory to his own people, but to the wicked a consuming fire.

It is one of the saddest and most solemn sights in the world, when we look round upon this, or indeed upon any other congregation, to consider, how "our foes are they of our own household," — how in fact, although by no means in intention, we are a hindrance to one another, many times unconsciously aiding the great enemy of us all to destroy our brethren. And then it is that, as I have

said before, one does feel keenly the real dissolution of Christ's church; one does feel grieved with the cruel mockery of those who would put a shadow upon us in place of the reality, and tell us that where we have rites, and outward worship, and a legitimate ministry, there we have the virtue of the church. But this is not our present business; only it is of the greatest importance for us all to consider, whether our brethren, by which term I mean those of our neighbours with whom we have most intercourse, do really help us in goodness, or hinder us. If they hinder us, then it is most clear, that the virtue of Christ's church is not there; that however entire may be its forms and outward ordinances, yet that its power of saving souls is wanting. For that which we still retain is the virtue of Christ's Gospel, not of Christ's church: the knowledge of what Christ has done for us, the knowledge, if I may so speak, of our divine helpers, of Christ our Saviour, and of the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier. This knowledge we have, and this we might have no less if we were in a desert island by ourselves, — and by this knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, by our single faith and our single prayers, we might, through God's grace, be saved. But the church was appointed, that our single faith might be helped by our brethren's faith, our single prayers helped by our brethren's prayers; that in them we might see reflected in a manner the image of Christ, and might be enkindled by it more and more to love it and become ourselves also changed into it. Assuredly, where many are living together, and do not help each other in goodness,— much more, where they actually though not intentionally hinder each other,—there any one among them may retain and use for his own salvation the blessings of Christ's Gospel, but he has not the benefits of Christ's church.

Now, then, let us see here how the case is with us; for

it is possible that the benefits of Christ's church may exist here and there, although they may be lost generally; the church may be found in a single house, as it was in its earliest state in those countries where it was recently planted. Let us see whether we help one another or hinder. And let me repeat again, that when I speak of our hindering one another, I do not mean at all that any one of us tries or wishes to hinder another; I mean only to inquire whether, in point of fact, we do hinder, not intentionally, but yet through our own fault; because out of an unbelieving and evil heart proceed words and works of evil, and the evil naturally struggles against the good.

Now we may hinder each other, first in those duties which are called directly duties of religion, and secondly in those other duties of our common lives which are in truth duties of religion no less, that is, as being our appointed service to God, but which the great enemy has taught us to call, and too often to regard, as secular or worldly. First, then, in what concerns our prayers, whether in public or private, in what concerns the reading of the Scriptures, in what concerns our coming to the holy communion, do we help each other or hinder? It has been known, — I do not say that it has been here, or that it is so now, but certainly it has been known,—that in all these things boys at schools have received very great hindrance from each other; it has been known that when young boys just come from home have knelt down at night to say their prayers, they have been interrupted, laughed at, annoyed for doing so: it has been known that if a boy younger than those who usually went to the communion, resolved himself to go to it, he was laughed at and taunted with pretending to be better than his neighbours. I believe that in this respect there is much improvement generally; I have heard not long since of a great school where, by common

consent, there is an interval of silence kept in every bedroom for some minutes, with the avowed object of preventing any one from being interrupted while he was saying his prayers. I heard of this with the greatest pleasure, and so I suppose would every one; and yet that it should afford such pleasure speaks sadly as to the old common state of schools. What must they have been, if we regard it as a great thing that they do not do directly the devil's work, and absolutely hinder the weak, the young, or the timid from doing their appointed duty to their Saviour. While, therefore, we thankfully allow that there is in this respect in schools a general improvement, yet we must not forget how very bad was that state from which they are improved; and that to be a little better when we were so ill as to be at death's very door, is far enough from being well and strong. And if we do not interrupt the prayers of any, or laugh at him for praying, or if we do not taunt any one who may resolve to come to the communion, yet considering the weakness of us all, may we not hinder each other by manifest indifference, may we not chill his faith by our manifest unbelief? For we know that sympathy is a great thing to us all; we know that if a man is speaking to an assembly of other men, he is encouraged and enkindled by their attention and their applause; but if they seem utterly indifferent to what he is saying, the spirit of eloquence in himself soon droops: he cannot speak because they will not hear. And I am sure that no less in all our common prayers, are our own earnestness and devotion increased or chilled by the behaviour of those around us. It is not to the purpose to say that we ought not to mind others; that our own life and death are our own concern no less, though others should take no thought of theirs. They who speak thus speak as if we were strong in faith, as if indeed life and death were surely present to all our

minds, as though heaven were open to our eyes as to Stephen's, and we could see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. But in very truth our faith is often very weak,—weak as the grain of mustard-seed,—it needs all the helps that it can have in order to rise and lay hold on Christ firmly. And it is this weak faith which our neighbour's faith would strengthen, which his indifference tends to quench. If we look around for an instant in this place, and see faces of listlessness, of weariness, of carelessness, perhaps for a moment actually irreverent, if we hear no sound of prayer or praise from any lips, but a general silence, as if we were unconcerned spectators or listeners to a worship that is not ours, how is it possible but that our own devotion should in some degree be checked also; when in this very place, what we see bears witness to the reality of the world and not to the reality of the things of God?

But let us proceed to other duties, and ask whether we help or hinder each other in them. And can we deny that we too often do greatly hinder, that we rarely help? We know full well that in your most direct duty of all, in diligence, namely, in the work of your education, you are often greatly and directly hindered; we know that to be diligent often exposes a boy to direct annoyance, often to ridicule. I have said before, what I believe to be strictly true, that this is a fault absolutely peculiar to schools; that I never heard of any other places where the especial business of any society was made a matter of persecution among its members. I never heard that among soldiers a man became popular by awkwardness, laziness, or cowardice, or that he was annoyed if he tried to learn his exercises well, and to become what a soldier should be. But at schools, undoubtedly, he who endeavours to be what a scholar should be is apt to be more or less an-

noyed; he who wishes really to make use of his time, he who wishes to improve himself, and to do his work well, is likely to be opposed by those about him, rather than to be encouraged. Or, passing to other things, have we never heard of any one's being tempted to disobedience, tempted to extravagance, tempted to drinking? Have we never heard of any one being more or less laughed at or obstructed if he wished to be obedient, if he wished to be careful of his money, if he was resolved neither to be drunken nor to drink? Then in these things are we like Christ's church, or are we like a society of unbelievers? Do we help one another to welcome this great festival of Easter with exceeding joy, or do we rather hinder one another, and keep ourselves in that state that God's ordinances, like the pillar of the cloud of old, are to us nothing but darkness?

We are false to each other, and to our common Lord in the highest degree, when we do thus hinder one another. We are false to our covenant in baptism, we are false to our covenant renewed at Christ's holy table, as before so also renewed by many of us this day. I doubt not, I never do doubt, that those who meet us at that holy table meet us in all sincerity; I doubt not that they consider what it is that they are doing; that they pray and resolve to lead better lives, and to be what Christ would wish them to be. Only I would earnestly ask them to remember, that one of the greatest parts of their duty is their duty to their brethren; that they cannot please Christ if they take no thought for, much more if they in any way obstruct or make more difficult, the salvation of others. And I would say, farther, that it matters little if you do not hinder each other in your so-called religious duties, if you hinder each other from serving God in your lives. You may not interrupt a boy at his prayers, you may not in the slightest

degree laugh at him or discourage him; if a young boy goes to the communion, you may not only not annoy him yourselves, but may restrain the annoyance of others. But of what avail is this either to you or him, if you taunt his diligence, if you laugh at his sobriety, if you despise him for his obedience? "Hath the Lord as great pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" Does He care for the bended knee and the reverent face at certain moments, and in particular places, so much as for the ready heart, and the obedient life, doing His will always in work and in play, resolved to follow Him in its moments of greatest freedom no less than in those of strictest observance? You do not hinder your brethren's prayers, but you hinder that for which God bids them pray; namely, the daily service of their hearts and lives. You would not deter any from coming to the communion, but you would crush the fruit of that communion the instant that it began to show itself in any one's daily practice. You know that I do not say this because I do not value reverence for sacred things. Glad indeed am I to see you attentive here, to believe that you respect God's worship, that you pray yourselves, and would wish others to pray also. But I am glad to see and to believe this, only because it affords a constant hope that it is, if not the sign, yet the forerunner of a real faith in you; that from reverent prayer you will rise to holy living. If this is not to be, then vain is the prayer, and the reverence is in God's sight but hypocrisy. We are not really Christ's, but shall be cast out of His kingdom with all things that offend, and with them that do iniquity; with all, that is, who attempt or encourage others in evil, or who do evil themselves.

LECTURE XV.

THE BAPTISMAL VOW.

1 Peter ii. 2, 3.

As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

It is the order of the Church, although frequently disregarded, that the baptism of our children should be celebrated in the midst of the church service, on Sundays or other holidays, when the most number of people come together; for this reason with others, that in the baptism of infants every man present may be put in remembrance of his own profession made to God in his baptism. And in the same way, if baptism were administered to grown up persons, whatever addresses were made to them to prepare them for that sacrament, might be made no less usefully to others who had been already baptized; inasmuch as what the one were going to promise the other had promised already, and what was said to urge the one to keep it when he had promised it, would apply no less to the other, either as an encouragement or a reproof.

What would be true of baptism is true of confirmation. What those who are going to be confirmed a few weeks hence will promise then, the younger members of our congregation will promise hereafter, the older members have promised before. Nay, even the members of another church, who neither have been nor ever will be confirmed

according to our ordinance, would yet be concerned in the subject no less: because what we either have promised or will promise in confirmation openly, in the presence of other men, they did virtually promise in their baptism, and if they are Christians at all, it must be with them no less than with us the business of their lives to keep it.

Let no one think, therefore, that if what I am going to say has reference to the approaching confirmation, it is therefore only the concern of those who are then to be confirmed. It is no less the concern of us all, old and young alike. In this as in all the other occasional services of the church, those for whom they are immediately performed do but stand forward in a manner to represent their brethren; what is said or done to one belongs not to one but to many. I gladly therefore seize the opportunity of the approaching confirmation to put into something of a regular form those truths which indeed concern us all alike; for though many of us may know them well enough, yet who is there who does them so perfectly as not to need to have his mind stirred up by them again in the way of remembrance,

On the day of the confirmation the Bishop puts this question to all that are to be confirmed: "Do ye here in the presence of God and of this congregation renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which your godfathers and godmothers then undertook for you?" And when they have answered each, "I do," then after a few short prayers, the Bishop lays his hand upon the head of each of them and says, "Defend, O Lord, this thy servant, with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue thine for ever, and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until

he come unto thy everlasting kingdom." Here we have, in this short question and answer, and in the laying on of the Bishop's hand and his prayer, the whole substance of the rite of confirmation. And we see at once that the question thus put, although to be answered aloud by those only who are then to be confirmed, is yet one really which it concerns us to answer in our hearts to God every day, and that prayer which the Bishop offers for those then confirmed, when he lays his hand upon their heads, is the prayer which we all also need daily, and the fulfilment of which would be the greatest blessing that we could enjoy upon earth. And as that prayer would not be offered for one who were to refuse to renew the promise required of him just before, so neither can it be offered effectually for us, whenever we also refuse in heart to renew the very same promise. God's grace will not defend us, nor shall we continue His for ever, nor increase in His Holy Spirit more and more, nor ever come to His everlasting kingdom, except so far as we do in heart continually renew that promise, and in our lives continually perform it. Let us see, then, what that promise is which we all have given once in our baptism, which we all have to renew in our hearts every day as long as we live, and which some of us will renew with their lips also in the sight not of God only but of men.

We promise to keep our vow made in baptism: and the vow made in our names at our baptism is as follows. "I renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that I will not follow nor be led by them." — "I believe in God's holy word which declares to us all the articles of the Christian faith, and I believe those articles of the Christian faith." — "And I will obediently keep God's holy will and command-

ments, and walk in the same all the days of my life." This is our baptismal vow, made then in our names, and spoken by the lips of others, renewed or to be renewed by us at our confirmation with our own lips, renewed and to be renewed by us all in our hearts every day to the end of our lives, unless we would undo the work of our baptism, and having been once brought near to God, refuse to abide with Him for ever.

This, then, is our baptismal vow, consisting, as we have heard, of three parts. First, we promise to renounce or give up evil things; next we declare that we believe true things; and lastly, we promise to do good things. We cast away the evil, that we may learn the truth and do the good. We cast away the evil which else would hinder us from seeing the truth and from doing the good. We learn the truth, because without the truths so taught us, we never could do the good. We do the good, because that is the great end of all, unless we do that, the evil which we have cast away will return sevenfold; and the truths which we have learnt will be no blessing to us, but our condemnation.

But in our hearts and lives, the evil which we cast away is for ever returning; the truths which we have learnt, we are for ever forgetting; the good which we should do we are continually leaving undone. Wherefore, as I said, our baptismal promise requires to be renewed not once only at our confirmation, but continually all our lives. We never can hear another renewing it with his lips, without having great cause to renew it ourselves also, for his need of renewing it is not greater than ours. And as the three parts of our vow, although distinct, are yet all renewed together at our confirmation, so do they need to be also by us all. We do not at one time need to renew one part, and at another time another part. If we kept one, we should keep all; breaking one, we break and have need to

renew all. Repentance, faith, and holiness are joined inseparably in all our earthly life; it is only by keeping them so joined that we shall come to that blessed division of them when, there being no more sin, there will be no more repentance; when sight will leave no place for faith, and holiness shall then be all in all for ever.

Every day we need repentance. Our baptismal vow promised to renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that we would not follow or be led by them. We promised to resist all those temptations which our Lord Himself, who in all things, save in sin, stood in the place of us all, did resist and overcome, and which are classed under those three great divisions, the flesh, the world, and the devil. True it is that the temptations of the flesh and of the world are also temptations of the devil, and by one or both of these he wins most of his victories over us. But as there are some temptations which seem not properly to belong to the flesh or the world, so they are put by themselves, and are called especially the temptations or works of the devil, because they have no other distinguishing name. These, however, are comparatively few in number, and comparatively few are tempted by them. It is either by the temptations of the flesh, or by those of the world, or by both, that by far the greatest number of souls, and in by far the greatest portion of their lives, are tempted and are overcome.

But the words are not, perhaps, plain to us; if we understand their meaning, it is but in part. The words may not be plain to us, but the things which they mean are familiar enough to the very youngest of us. Ask a child, ask many a boy, nay, ask many a man, whether he renounces the flesh and the world, and the question will not come home

to his mind, and the flesh and the world will be merely unmeaning words to him, so that his answer cannot be said to be given in sincerity, because, in fact, he knows not what he is saying. Yet take any boy and ask him to tell you some of the things which give him the greatest pleasure, and if he would tell you honestly, he would name eating and drinking, and lying long in bed, and having little or no work, and having a great variety of amusements. Also he would like being made of consequence; he would like being praised, and being admired, and being a general favourite. Now the first-named pleasures, eating and drinking, and sleeping, and idleness, and amusements, may be called the temptations of the flesh; liking to be made of consequence, to be admired, and to be thought much of, may be called temptations of the world. And do we not see that almost all the faults of which young boys are guilty, arise from one or other of these kinds of temptation? So that whether they understand the names "flesh" and "world" or not, yet they know well enough the real things which those names mean, and they must know very well that it is owing to the power of those things over them, that all their faults are committed. I might name some other very familiar things in each kind, but what I have said will be sufficient to show what they are.

These things lead us into faults; faults as we call them in common speech, sins as God regards them. There is a wonderful difference in the force of these two words. Faults are things which are to be made allowance for, which are not to destroy the regard and love which our friends feel for us, which may cause those who have authority over us to look gravely at us for a minute, but soon the displeasure passes away, and with it pass from our minds also all painful sensations with regard to our

conduct. But sins, even to our careless minds, are something deeper. Will they pass away too and be forgotten? Will God love us in spite of them? Will He receive us notwithstanding them? Will he regard them with displeasure only for a moment, and then be gracious to us, as if they had never been committed? May we forget them wholly, and be rid of all sorrow and of all shame? What is the answer to this? I know what would be the answer of a boy's heart if he liked to put it out in words, and the answer of many a man's heart would agree with it. Nay, the answer of all our hearts would in some sort agree with it; for even those who in old times felt remorse for evil done most keenly, yet felt it for a few great crimes only, and for lesser sins appear not to have given themselves much concern. We are all apt to call and to think our sins mere faults, things amply wiped out by expressing sorrow for them, things which it is quite unkind and unreasonable in auy one to remember long with severity. It is not the young only who do so, we all more or less should by nature do the same. And why then should we not do so? Why should we regard our sins very seriously? Why should we pray earnestly to be enabled to regard them more and more seriously, to be enabled to feel them deeply, perpetually? I will tell you why; because Christ died for us.

This does indeed speak to us in a language which it is not possible to express too strongly. But does it speak alone, or does it not confirm what the whole of the Old Testament declares from one end to the other? What is the story of this morning's lesson: of the fourteen thousand and five hundred cut off by the plague for murmuring; of the two hundred and fifty burned with fire from the Lord for a breach of his ceremonial law only: of

Dathan and Abiram, with their children, — for so it is expressly said,—with their children and all that belonged to them, going down alive into the pit, because they were in heart and in tongue, — for it can hardly be said that the sin had showed itself in any flagrant act, — but because they were in heart and in tongue discontented and rebellious against God's appointments? All this we have in one single chapter, and I need not say how many other chapters speak the same lesson. Therefore the Old Testament speaks in no doubtful language, that sin is not a little thing to be unnoticed by God, to be soon forgotten by us. It tells us that sin is a very great thing, and a lasting. It tells us that God will by no means pass it over. And what it tells us, that the death of Christ our Lord does indeed confirm in infinite measure. If sin were really a little thing, why should Christ have died? I dare not attempt to dwell on the awfulness of that sacrifice, which neither word nor thought of created being can reach to. But only consider such language as this, and think whether it is possible to estimate it worthily. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," and yet sin, which required such a sacrifice, we think may be no sooner committed than forgotten. Wherefore, when we promise in our baptism to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and when we break this promise, as we do daily, and commit sins, both of the flesh and the world, it is not a little matter, but an infinitely great one; and the evil not renounced, but allowed to overcome us, is a thing which requires of us indeed a deeper thought and a deeper sorrow than to many of us may seem even possible. With this I would

now conclude, for it is the point on which all that I hope to say hereafter depends. We shall not care to believe God's truths, nor shall we care to follow His holiness, unless we do earnestly desire to renounce our evil, unless we watch for it everywhere, and fear God's judgment upon it, and believe that it is as great and as abiding as His word, and as the death of His Son declares it to be. May God's Holy Spirit therefore convince us of sin; convince us of what it is, and what it will bring us to; that so we may fear God indeed, and be of a humble and contrite heart, and feel the need of salvation, and so learn to believe in truly, and to love our Saviour.

LECTURE XVI.

THE DEATH OF SIN.

ROMANS viii. 10.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin: but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

IT would be vain to deny that in this verse, as well as in many other parts of the chapter from which it is taken, and which was read as the second lesson this afternoon, there is much and great difficulty. Whenever it is read, it is one of those parts of the Scripture which the mass of the congregation cannot be expected fully to understand. I do not mean only a congregation such as ours, where so many may be supposed unable to understand it owing to their youth; but it is true no less of congregations generally. Yet here as in other similar instances, while a com-

mon hearer may meet with much which he cannot understand, yet he will also meet with much which he can; nay, I think that with moderate attention the general purpose of the chapter may be made out clearly, although the meaning and application of every particular passage may not be so. It will not be hard, I think, to perceive that the apostle is urging strongly the necessity of being ourselves like Christ if we would hope to be redeemed by Christ. It is evident that he dwells much on the difference between the flesh and the spirit, saying that the flesh is death, and that the spirit is life. Farther, it would I think be plain also, that by these terms, flesh and spirit, were meant something of the same sort with sin and holiness; so that the object of the chapter would be to show that however much God has done for us, yet we shall not really be benefited by it unless we are such as God would have us to be, that is, spiritual and holy.

Yet, again, it is evident that there is in the chapter something more than this. It is not merely a warning that if we walk after the flesh we shall die. Other language there is in it, not of warning but of the highest encouragement, of encouragement so great that, as is well known, some have supposed it to do away with the necessity of all warning, and to inspire Christ's people with complete assurance. For the apostle, as it is said, sets before us the golden chain of God's grace, of which each link is by God's almighty power fast joined to the others, and the first link is God's foreknowledge, and the last is man's salvation. For so it runs: "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son; and whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." So that the apostle may well add, "What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Thus the chapter seems to contain two different kinds of language, which appear, it may be, hard to reconcile; and so we are tempted, according to our dispositions, to choose either the one or the other exclusively; to make this description of the golden chain of God's grace every thing or nothing. But if we believe that in this chapter as in other parts of Scripture, there was at work a greater wisdom than man's; that He to whom all things are known, and to whom those truths which to us appear at variance are seen to be in divinest harmony, willed that there should be put before His church this very chapter as it stands, and not the first part of it only, nor yet the latter part of it only; then neither should we pass by either part of it, but try to learn the lesson of the whole, satisfied that in that lesson, and not in either part of it singly, we shall find the very truth of God.

Do I then mean to say that I could understand myself, or expound to others the very exact form of this truth? That I could explain exactly how far we should follow one part of the apostle's language and how far the other? God forbid that I should be so presumptuous. There is a cloud over the things spoken of in this chapter, which, as I believe, no human eye can fully penetrate; there will remain statements to be comprehended as it seems to me only in part, and which we should do very wrong to interpret as containing no more than we can comprehend or render intelligible to others. In the meanwhile, this most remarkable chapter, containing things so removed above our full comprehension, is yet rich in instruction, not for the learned only and for those whose faculties are the highest, but for Christ's people generally, for the uneducated, and for the young. What though a part of the moon's orb is dark, yet that side which is light is a light for us, we can all see to walk by it. When I chose my

text from this eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, I thought that the whole chapter spoke the language which we most needed, which we might fit to that very course of exhortation which I have been lately following, with respect to our breaking or keeping our vows in baptism.

For those vows, as we know, engaged us to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, to believe in Christ, and to keep God's commandments. And here St. Paul tells us, that if we live after the flesh, instead of renouncing it, we shall die; but that if we do renounce it, if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. And again he says in the text, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." Words, it may be, not plain at the first hearing, but which evidently intend to give us a test whether Christ be in us or no; that is, whether we have kept our baptismal vows or no; for no doubt the idea of baptism is a union with Christ, and if we have fulfilled its meaning we are in union with Him, we dwell in Him and He in us.

If Christ be in us, our body is dead because of sin. We perceive what is meant by comparing other passages of this epistle. "In that He died, He died unto sin once." Christ died once because of our sins, which He took upon Him as though they had been His own, and because of these sins He was pleased to die. If Christ then be in us, there is in us death because of sin. That is, there is in us a sense of and an image of sin's working death. Sin there is in us we well know, and that sin must have worked death; we, though alive, must in some sort be dead. Observe the strength of the expression which St. Paul uses more than once; we must in some sort be dead though alive, and the more dead the more alive; for, says St. Paul, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet

not I, but Christ liveth in me." I am crucified with Christ, he says; that is, I am in part dead; or as it is in the text, the body is dead because of sin, even the body of sin which must be destroyed, or the flesh, which is not and cannot be subject to God's law; for these expressions all mean the same thing, they all declare that if Christ is in us, a great part of our original nature with which we were born must be dead.

Now do we think that St. Paul used all this language merely to express what might have been put in plain words thus: if Christ is in you, you cannot be living in sin? No doubt this is true, and St. Paul's language contains this truth; but it contains, I think, something more, and that which it contains more is the very thing which we have such need to remember. He uses the expressions, dead unto sin, being crucified with Christ, the body must be dead because of sin, and the like, — in order to show us that what he means is very great; that he speaks of a great change in us, a change not to be wrought in an instant, nor by any means to be effected without our feeling it, like the various processes of our bodily growth and nourishment, which go on unconsciously within us.

But no man, we may well believe, ever died unconsciously. To be dead may indeed be conceived to be a state of rest, but not to die. He who is dead to sin is the happiest of human beings; in him, indeed, all would be peace; but how can he be dead without first dying? There must be a struggle before there comes the final rest, and this struggle cannot be unfelt in its earliest stages if not in its latest; in its latest if not in its earliest; in some, if not in all.

Now then for those who are going to be confirmed, for those who have been confirmed, — for all of us, young or old alike, here is the question: Have we died to sin or are

we dying? We must know, full surely we must know, if we are the one or the other. For as certainly as no man ever passed from full bodily health to death without knowing it in some part of the process or another, so surely we cannot unconsciously have passed from that state in which sin was in full vigour within us, to the state in which sin is dead; there is now in us, or there must have been, a struggle; we may be quite sure, if we neither feel nor remember any such, that as yet our body is neither dead because of sin, nor yet dying.

Look at the process of natural death; it is not the same in all, but most various. Sudden death happens sometimes, but is the exception; in most cases we die not all at once but gradually; in some instances death is working for several months together, and his last stroke is gentle, because so much of his work has been done before. So it is with spiritual death. I do not deny that here too death sometimes does his work suddenly, with a mighty power of fear and of remorse, tearing down as in an instant the whole body of sin in its full vigour. But this is most rare; most commonly, spiritual death, like natural, does its work gradually; with many an ebb and flow, with many a struggle of the natural sin to stand against it, struggles which it reduces but cannot quite put down; so that for years and years of life we may be said to be dying daily. And oftentimes, too, the work begins and is fatally interrupted; death begins its work, but the strength of sin baffles it; and so the body of sin is not dead, but remains alive and vigorous, and its life is our eternal death.

But still, although the struggle be not over, although we may not be dead to sin, yet the great question still remains, are we dying to it? Depend upon it, that it is not to die to sin if we at certain times, as before the communion, or before our confirmation,—if we at certain times

only look into ourselves, and say some prayers more than usual, and read some serious books which we do not commonly read, and make some good resolutions, and then think that our work is done. This many of us, it is likely, may have done, may be doing now, or meaning to do it, yet we cannot say that they are dying to sin. What they have done, has been done perhaps very deliberately; they did these things as thinking it right to do them, and when they were over they were well pleased with themselves for having done them; but where was the struggle within them which announces the work of death, the fear of God's anger, the painful sense of sin, the praying with the earnestness of men in extremest peril that Christ who had shed his blood for us would now deliver us? Where was the leaving off old habits, painful almost as the actual dissolution of the body? Where was the consciousness of the sin that generally cleaves to our whole nature, not only in this or that particular act, but in our hearts altogether, which Christ's grace must destroy no less generally, and the destruction of which, so wholly has it engrossed us, seems to be no less than the destruction of our own selves?

If all this seems perfectly strange to us, strange to our experience, extravagant to our notions, then we may be very sure that we have not died to sin, nor yet begun to die to it; that sin rather is alive within us, and that it is ourselves rather that are perishing. Assuredly the great work is yet to do; we are still living after the flesh, living after our own evil nature, and therefore we cannot please God.

What I have said would then have its proper effect, if it led any one to consider whether now or at any former time of his life, he feels, or can remember ever to have felt, any such struggle within him, between his sinful nature and God's grace, as can in any respect be worthy

of the name of dying. Whether he remembers any such process of anxiety and great watchfulness, in which he beheld death as it were on one side of him and life on the other, and so fled from the manifest danger of his state, and resolved that his sin should die and not himself, lest if it continued alive he should himself die for ever. This conflict takes place sooner or later; its length is longer or shorter, as it may be, but it exists, and exists perceptibly at some time or other in the life of every soul whom Christ redeems.

Two deaths, my brethren, we must die, every one of us. One is the death of our body, which will happen alike to us all; but what the other death is, is the great matter of salvation or of destruction. Our bodies, our natural bodies, will die alike in all of us; this is one death; but besides this shall all die another, we shall all feel the death of our sins, or the death of our souls. We shall feel the one or the other, for no death can happen without our feeling it, only whilst the death of our sins is felt most at its beginning, so the death of our souls is often felt only in its last stage, when its stroke can no more be repelled, and its victory is certain. Remember that one of these two deaths, both I cannot deny painful, we must die every one of us. Which shall it be then? Shall it be the death of our sin or the death of our soul? The death whose pain comes at first most, yet even then, by Christ's grace, it is endurable; but afterwards the suffering and the struggle lessen, and there comes the rest of death, and the vigour and the freshness and the glory of that divine and eternal life which the death of our sins has given birth to;—or shall it be the death whose first strokes are silent and painless, which pours in its poison and we feel it not,—more and more triumphant, and we more and more insens-

ible; till behold, its work is accomplished, and then the agony is neither to be uttered nor conceived, and Christ is gone from us for ever, and life and death are become one for our destruction;—a death of all good, a life of all evil.

LECTURE XVII.

THE DEATH OF SIN.

PSALM lxxxv. 8.

I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

THIS is the Bible version of these words; the Prayer-book version gives the last part differently: "He shall speak peace unto His people and to His saints, that they turn not again." It was not, we may feel sure, intentional: yet had the same men been engaged in both translations, and if they had felt that there was some doubt as to the exact rendering of the original, they could not have done better than give the above two versions, which represent so faithfully the two different aspects, if I may so speak, under which the Scripture represents God's mercies; sometimes describing them as things which must absolutely hinder us from sinning: "He shall speak peace unto His people, &c., that they turn not again." "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth,

nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And at other times pointing out the great wickedness if we do sin in spite of them, and after them: "God will speak peace unto His people and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly." "If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor;" and "there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." Thus it is that the more certainly the Scripture speaks of God's grace, producing its fit effect upon us, the more grievous and the more hopeless does it consider our sin, if after all the effect is not produced.

And yet we find that God's grace, although the rejection of it does doubtless put us in a worse case than we ever could be else, is spoken of in the Scripture as a great mercy and a great blessing. Nor are we ever permitted to withhold the knowledge of it from others, lest they should become worse than they were before by refusing it. So it is with all instruction; so it is with all attempts to make instruction impressive; so it is with all solemn services, with confirmation, with the holy communion. We know that all these things have a power of death in them, as well as a power of life; we cannot but fear that if to some they are as they should be, a means of grace and salvation, yet that to others they may be a hardening of the heart, and an occasion of greater sin; yet, as I said before, we must offer them; God will speak His gracious message of peace; be it our care that we turn not again to folly.

Now the object of what I said last Sunday was to impress upon you, if possible, that the turning to God must sooner or later involve in it a painful effort; that what is called "dying to sin" cannot be a process to be gone

through easily and unconsciously. I wish to impress this also, that what is thus called death is mostly a gradual process: a thing going on for a long time, and not beginning and ending in one sharp single struggle. Yet neither is it true that it goes on quite evenly; on the contrary, it has its sharper seasons and its gentler ones; it has times when it destroys much of the principle of sin within us, it has times also when it does little more than hold its ground; and the struggle seems suspended. Now if at this present time, during the preparation for confirmation, and for the communion which will immediately follow confirmation, any progress in the death of sin has been consciously made by any one, it is very possible that after the confirmation is over it may for a while be relaxed, and no perceptible change may for a time be going on within us. Only, let not what has been done be undone; let not the sin that was killed revive; but let our better part keep the victory which it has gained, to follow it up after a while more decisively.

But now for the present, I will show what in your preparation for confirmation would be in some sense a conscious death unto sin, and I will show you what would not. In the first place, a certain degree of knowledge will be required of every one; but what is thus absolutely required by the church is but very little. A knowledge of the Catechism is required, such a knowledge as includes being able to say it by heart, and to answer the questions in it with an understanding of their meaning. This is not hard, and it is probable that very few if any will fail in this. And farther, if any one were to be guilty of a clear act of sin, it would in that case be impossible to present such an one as fit for confirmation. But yet it is to be hoped that we shall not have any one whom we must exclude on this ground. Now, then, whoever is correct in

his conduct, and whoever answers to the few and simple questions which are put to him at his examination, must be pronounced by us to be fit for confirmation and for the communion; there can be no hindrance on our part to his receiving either. Suppose, then, a boy to be so far qualified, and suppose also that he takes no greater pains with himself than to become thus qualified, or perhaps to read over some tract or other on the subject which we may have recommended to him. He will be confirmed then, he will receive the communion; but will he have in any sense died to sin: or could our anxiety respecting him be that he should not turn again to folly, when it could not be truly said that he ever had turned from folly at all? This may be the case with many, yet it is beyond the power of any one but themselves to hinder it. As I said before, we can only judge by the outside; whoever answers the questions put to him, and abstains from gross and notorious sin, we must recommend as fit for confirmation. The examination may not be long, nor needs it to be so; and thus the work may seem to be soon and easily over; costing on the one side little labour, and bringing forth on the other but little fruit; and such it will be, if you are not resolved to make it otherwise; for in this matter we cannot help you; it must be your own work, and the help must come not from man but from God.

But what will it be for any one who is resolved by God's grace that it shall be otherwise; who intends to begin in this short season of preparation the great work of dying to sin, in the hope that what he now begins will be perfected as his life goes on, until the end? It will be a work of infinite blessing, which I will now attempt to describe minutely, hoping and indeed not doubting that there will be some to realize it. And remember also that this same death unto sin must be undergone by all of us; so that

what I am saying does by no means suit those only who are going to be confirmed. Many of us, I trust, besides those who are confirmed, will go with them to Christ's holy table: should we go thither with our sins neither dead nor dying, but alive and in their full vigour? Have not we too the same work before us? Have not we all the same thing to do more or less; to begin it, or to continue it, or to bring it onwards towards its completion? Therefore let us see what would happen to him, who in the interval of time which will elapse between this day and the day of the confirmation and communion, that is to say, in the interval of not more than one fortnight, were to undergo that great thing, or the first stages of it, or any part of its progress, that great thing which the Scripture calls dying unto sin. What would have happened to him, who at the end of this coming fortnight, sitting where he now sits, and with all sights and sounds around him the same as they are now, should yet have experienced in the interval the greatest of all changes which can befall a human soul, should have undergone consciously some of the pains of that great inward struggle which works death to our sins, and to ourselves life and glory.

Now if I could relate to you step by step the progress of natural death; if I could lay in a manner before your eyes the decay of the body, such as it will happen one day to us all; if I could describe the oppression, the gasping for breath, the restlessness, sometimes the great pain, of the breaking down of the health and life of our frames; if I could trace the changes to you which appear in the countenance of a dying person, and if it were permitted us to unveil the very mystery of death itself, and to know what is working in the mind when it is nigh, even at the doors; I am well aware that such a description would be listened to by all with eager interest, because it would

convey that sense of exciting terror which when unconnected with present danger is so delightful to the imaginations of us all. But the process of the death of sin has in it nothing horrible, nothing exciting; the imagination may not be struck by it, and yet it is of an interest really far deeper than the death of the body, and an interest which we may all presently realize. It works quietly and invisibly to the eyes of others, but most perceptibly and most truly to him who is undergoing it.

I believe that every one knows upon a very little reflection what are his own most besetting faults. Now let him consider that if he is to come to God, these must, in the first place, be renounced and forsaken. I call those our most besetting faults to which we are either most inclined by natural constitution, or are most tempted by circumstances, because the fashion of the society around us is in their favour. What these are, I say, we can each tell readily. Let us suppose that we fix upon them, and name them to God in our prayers this night, asking Him to enable us for Christ's sake to overcome them. The prayer is remembered and repeated in the morning, and the resolution is formed in Christ's strength to watch for and to resist his enemy. Now this very watchfulness is in itself a great effort, an effort greater than can be well conceived by those who have never tried it. It is hard to be ready at every moment to check ourselves, when we have been used to let our lives run on freely. Then the temptation comes, and we have to make the actual struggle against it. Suppose that the temptation has been to neglect a duty rather than to commit a sin; suppose it to be that common temptation of wasting time or money, of employing neither to the uses for which God entrusted them to us. Will it be a light thing to employ our time carefully: to do what we have to do in earnest; to consider what else we can do

besides our immediate and necessary business; to hallow that by devoting it consciously to God's service, which before was never hallowed at all, even when the work in which it was spent was in itself good? One day of such Christian watchfulness, even with respect to one single known fault, whether of omission or commission, will undoubtedly bring with it enough of effort and enough of pain, to show us that the death of sin is no easy and unconscious process, no mere walking on the way which we are in, as if it would of itself lead us right at the last.

But now suppose farther, that any one while so watching against one particular fault, and so praying, were to have his eyes opened more generally; were to see his faults, not in one point or points only, but as running through his whole nature; were to look at the commands of God's law, which bid us to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul, and our neighbour as ourselves. This is very often the crisis of a man's whole state; the view thus opened may be too much for him, the contest which he sees before him may be too great; he may shrink from it, and resolutely shut his eyes upon it, and comfort himself with the old charm of unbelief, whispering to the sinner that he shall not surely die.

Many, I believe, struggle successfully against one marked fault, but fly back from the prospect of having to overcome a whole sinful nature, and having to become made anew after God's image. The evil spirit which was cast out returns with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and the man is lost for ever. So it is but too often, but so it is not always. Let us suppose, then, that we bear this sight of our general sinfulness, not with a cowardly despair, but with a Christian resolution; that feeling as St. Paul did, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" we may add his other

words no less, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Then indeed there begins that struggle which may be truly called the death of sin. Then sin is looked for and hunted out, as it were, of every thought, and word, and deed, and then it appears, to our amazement, how deeply it had possessed us. Then our old nature begins to die sensibly, in no part without pain. What a multitude of evil thoughts possess us, what a multitude of evil words we utter, what a multitude of evil deeds we do, when they are all seen by the light of God's grace, kindling in our own hearts an answering fire of holy resolution, which leaves no part within us unenlightened! Do I say that such a work could be accomplished in a fortnight? Nay, rather it will be the work of our lives; it will not be finished, we may be well assured, till Christ call us to Himself. But it may be begun in a fortnight, or in less time; it may be begun truly and consciously. We may feel, not that we have conquered sin within us, but that we have discovered it and are struggling against it; we may feel that it has begun to die; we may feel, at least, that it has died in our purposes, that we are set against it utterly, that we have learnt to know it, to watch for it, to renounce it. This may be done by any of us, before the next fourteen days be over. And by whomsoever it shall be done, whoever he is who, resolving first to watch for and to resist some one or more known faults, has thus learnt to see into himself far more deeply, has seen the sin which has dominion over his whole nature, and has cried out for Christ's help to conquer it, he, when he comes to the confirmation or to the communion, will come as one needing and seeking strength in those ordinances, and therefore sure to find it; he will derive from them a greater grace for the time to come, and will go on dying to sin more and more, and living more and more to God.

LECTURE XVIII.

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

1 Corinthians vi. 15, 19, 20.

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?—What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price.

I do not know that any words could be more suitable than these for our consideration this day. I said some time since that all church ordinances, such as confirmation and the holy communion, had their side of death no less than their side of life; that along with their blessing if used aright, lay their danger if abused. And now as the prospect of our receiving these ordinances is nearer, I would have the sense of this to be present to us more strongly; but I would have us consider also that this double aspect of good and of harm belongs not to particular church ordinances only, but to our whole condition; that the words of the text, which apply to us all, whether we be confirmed next Sunday or no, whether we mean to receive the communion next Sunday or no, yet involve in them the very same truths; we are all the members of Christ, we are all the temples of the Holy Ghost;—we are all of us no longer our own, but bought with a price; and those things cannot be true of us for nothing.

Even then, if there were any amongst us who in the

carelessness of an evil heart were rejoiciug in himself, saying, as it were, "I am not to be confirmed next week, —I am not going to receive the communion,—what is said of the danger of abusing these ordinances does not concern me;" if, I say, there were any one amongst us who in his own evil heart did in secret breathe such a thought as this; yet let him be told that his rejoicing, as it is most wicked, so is it also most foolish. For though he may not be going to be confirmed, though he may turn his back upon the Lord's table, either wilfully, or because he is too young to approach it, yet still his body is a member of Christ; — still he is a part of the Holy Ghost's temple, still he is not his own, but bought with a price; so that Christ's hand is upon him still, and it is in vain that he would in a manner stand aside amongst mere spectators, as if he did in no sort belong to Him. Let him deny his part in Christ ever so loudly, and all that he can gain by it is that he will be considered by Christ, not as His redeemed and loving disciple, but as His murmuring and rebellious slave.

But why should we suppose that Christ's mercies will be rejected, and his service disclaimed? It surely need not and will not be so in every case; there must be some to whom it is a pleasure rather than a terror to hear that they are not their own but Christ's; that their bodies belong to Him, and that in them the Holy Ghost has His temple. It should indeed be a pleasure to hear this, yet is it also an awful pleasure; for it is an evil thing to dishonour Christ's body, and to profane God's temple.

God so declaring His love to us, so claiming us as His own, so dwelling amongst us and in us, surely there is a great encouragement to us to come before Him with our earnest prayers, that what He claims as His own He will for ever keep so, — that the body and soul which He has vouchsafed to dwell in once, He will not depart from as He

did from Shiloh or from Jerusalem, but will abide in them as His living temple for ever.

And I have good hopes that many in the past week have so prayed, have opened their hearts in some degree to God, have tried to obtain His assistance. If they have not prayed readily it is no wonder; we know not what we should pray for as we ought; and if the time which we had was short, and the exercise was at all strange to us, we may not have known well what first to put forward, or in what shape to present our hearts towards God. Nay, we may feel our hearts themselves to be a tangled mass which we do not well understand, desiring and not desiring, sincere we hope, yet careless we know too well, and very feeble. If we repeat the prayers of a book, that does not seem to help us in the way we want, yet for our own prayers we find no easy utterance. I can conceive that some when they may have set themselves to pray in private, may have yet been perplexed and unsatisfied, and scarcely have known what to say to God, or whether their words expressed the real wants of their souls or no. It is to such a state of mind I suppose,—a state which I can well conceive in the young, or in any whose life and habits have led them but little to reflection; whose eyes and thoughts have been turned outwards ever and not inwards; it is to such a state I believe that we may apply a passage in the eighth chapter of the Romans, a passage which seems mysterious and vague it may be to some persons, but which I think is full of the deepest comfort for any who are in the condition which I have been describing: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," says St. Paul; "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." If we are perplexed in our prayers, not knowing what to say ill able to read our own heart's

desire truly; yet if we are really wishing for God's help, if we have thrown ourselves as it were at His feet, then that vague and indistinct desire for help has One who purifies it, and presents it before God; and if we feel beset with the perplexity of our condition, and find no word of utterance, yet the Spirit of God speaks for us in our very silence, and intercedes for us acceptably. Think not that you have presented yourselves before God for nothing, because you could not tell him clearly all that you wanted; still it was an act of accepted prayer, distinct before God and effectual; God saw in you Christ's redeemed, and heard in you the intercession of His Holy Spirit.

I would not be misunderstood in this matter, nor give to any bold or careless spirit any false encouragement. Yet it happens many times that we ourselves, even in questioning some of you, find that you can ill put out your meaning, that your knowledge is very imperfect, and the power of applying it no less so; we perceive a want of force and clearness in your notions which we cannot at once remedy. Now I am only supposing this to be the case with one whose heart is yet honest, who does wish to come to God, and to turn from evil. I am supposing that such an one feels the very same difficulties in expressing himself, the same want of clearness in his views, when he comes before God, that he shows when he is questioned by us. It is to such an one who really wishes to be good, and to such an one only, that I am applying St. Paul's words. I would wish him not to be discouraged because of his want of clear understanding and ready utterance. But neither should he be in the slightest degree encouraged if the fault goes deeper than his understanding, if he does not understand only because he does not care. As surely as God is full of mercy to those who are ignorant but wish to serve Him, so does He utterly abhor the prayer which is indis-

tinct because it is insincere, which says little, not because the heart is full, but because it is empty.

But speaking again to those who are in earnest, to those who listen to what I am saying as to a matter which is their real concern; to those, I say, who wish to make their confirmation and communion a real good to them, but are embarrassed by their want of knowledge, and their inexperience; I would say to them, pray to God again, not less often, but even oftener if it may be; and pray for these three things,—for an honest heart, for a thinking and understanding mind, and for a loving and obedient spirit. Your hearts are honest now, you come to God wishing to be good. Say to Him, then, something of this sort. "O Lord, keep my heart true and honest; keep alive in me the real true wish to be good." Well then, if you wish to be good, you will wish to leave off all those things that God condemns. Here you do not need help,—help, I mean, as to telling you what you should say. I am quite sure that if you try you will recollect directly things which you often do wrong in, and in which, if you are not careful, you will surely do wrong again. Remember these things, all or some of them; and above all take care not to forget any one wilfully. Name them to God in plain words, and say, O Lord, help me in such a thing, naming it, that I may not again sin against Thee in it. Such a prayer will show that you are honest, that you really wish for God's help to save you from your sins.

Then also, you may and should pray for a thinking and understanding mind. Indeed this is a most necessary and a most Christian prayer. The gift of wisdom is the subject of almost one whole book of the Bible, the proverbs. St. Paul prays, and bids others pray, for an enlightened understanding, for the fulness of wisdom. St. James says, "If any

man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." Without thoughtfulness there can be no goodness, nor any holiness. And for youth especially, whose besetting fault it is to be thoughtless, the prayer for thoughtfulness is most becoming. I know that in natural abilities there are great differences between one and another, yet still the great difference which strikes me in you is not nearly so much one of natural ability as of thoughtfulness. Some seem to think of themselves and of God, others seem not to think; and this is a difference great, very great now, and which by and by will be infinite. Pray for a thinking and serious mind; one not always giddy and foolish and vain, one not blind to its own faults, and always quick in making excuses for them, but one humble and sensible, one which may know what it is to say, "I have sinned," and "Lord, pardon me for my sin." And as you pray for a thoughtful mind, resolve also, with God's help, that you will contrive to make opportunities for uttering such prayers after the confirmation is over; for I am quite sure that if you do not pray to become thoughtful, you will not become so; whereas if you do pray to become so, you will even by that very prayer be thoughtful sometimes, I mean so often as you utter it, and there is hope that you will become so oftener.

Thirdly, pray for a loving and obedient spirit. "God is love, and he who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." So said the blessed apostle St. John. You do not dwell in hatred, God forbid; I can well conceive that many of you will find but little difficulty in that part of the preparation for the communion, which consists in putting ourselves into a state of peace and charity towards all men. But still, there may be no hatred in us, in the common sense of the word, and yet nothing of a loving

spirit. For while we love ourselves so very much there is no room for the love of others. Pray very earnestly for a loving spirit both towards God and man. It is but too true that love waxes cold. Whom do we love truly? Is it our parents, against whom we sometimes murmur, to whom we often give pain, to whom we still oftener neglect to give pleasure? Is it our brothers and sisters, whom, when we are amongst them, we sometimes feel jealous of, sometimes tease them, sometimes are unkind to them? Is it our friends here, with whom also we sometimes quarrel on slight grounds, whom in absence we often think nothing of, and for whose highest or real good we never care at all? Where is our love then, and who are the objects of it, if it is cold even towards these? May I name more indifferent persons, companions or common acquaintance? May I name the poor? May I dare to say that we love Him who so loved us that He laid down his life for our sakes? Or if we talk of loving God, St. John tells us at once that we are liars, "For he who loveth not earnestly his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Alas! who or what is it that we do love heartily and constantly except that vile and worthless thing,—for most vile and worthless it must be in such a case,—that most vile and worthless and hateful thing, our own self? Pray then earnestly for the spirit of love to God and to man, for that which is above all others, the spirit of freedom. Pray for that greatest of all blessings, a loving heart; that you may love your parents heartily, and your other relations and your friends; and that your love may not stop there, but may flow on wider still, that you may love your companions, love your acquaintance, love the poor; love, in short, all for whom Christ died, and whom God made, because you have learned to love God and Christ.

Pray for these things, and watch together with your praying for opportunities of acting according to your prayer. What a changed place would this become if the spirit of love possessed it; if we all felt kindly to one another, shrinking from giving pain, happy to give pleasure! No cruelty then, nor evils much short of cruelty; no roughness, nor bitterness, nor clamour, nor evil speaking, nor coarse jests, nor wanton annoyance. And if the spirit of thoughtfulness were here, and the spirit of honesty towards God and our consciences, what should we say then? Or would not God's ordinances then be seen indeed to have their appointed fruit? And would the language of the text be then any other but full of happiness and of truth? Our bodies would be indeed Christ's members, His Holy Spirit would abide in us, we should not be our own, but bought with a price, bought by Christ once with His own blood, and never to be cast away.

LECTURE XIX.

THE DANGER OF RELAPSE.

St. John vi. 67, 68, 69, 70.

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

For the last month or six weeks this congregation has been divided in some manner into two classes, at least there was felt to be a division among you, however little there was one in fact, or how far greater soever were the points which we all had in common, than those in which there was a difference. But now what difference there might have been between some of us and others, inasmuch as some were on the point of receiving the rite of confirmation, and others were not so, either from having received it before, or from not being old enough yet to receive it, what difference of this sort there was felt to exist amongst us, is now all over: we are become as it were one body, and what we have in common now appears to be much more than the minuter circumstances in which we may differ. To those who were confirmed this morning, no less than to those confirmed formerly, their confirmation is become a thing past; and all of us therefore who have been confirmed at all, stand towards it in the same position. So again it is with the holy communion, which

so very large a portion of our congregation have this day received together. The preparation is past, and the receiving is past, and what remains for us all, both those who had partaken of the communion before, and those who partook of it for the first time this day, but to be earnest in laying hold of the grace which we have received, lest by any means we should allow it to slip?

Experience has so often proved that men have not laid fast hold on the grace which they had received, but have let it pass away from them, that we may well conceive our Lord to say to each successive congregation who have professed to be His disciples, "Will ye also go away? For eighteen hundred years I have accomplished the work of man's redemption; your salvation has been purchased, the door of the kingdom of heaven has been set open, but yet age after age and year after year, men have refused to be saved, and the way to eternal life has been thrown open to thousands in vain. Will ye also go away? Will ye also despise the riches of God's goodness, and the precious blood of Christ which purchased your salvation, and will ye go after your own devices, each man after the idols of his own heart, and be not saved but lost?"

Now I trust that there are a great many amongst us,—may I not dare to say all?—whose hearts are as yet warmed with the good resolutions which they made this morning, and who would answer in sincerity to our Lord's question, "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." But what was our Lord's reply? "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? You profess to be very zealous to follow me, to be fully persuaded that there is no salvation to be found elsewhere. And yet out of the number of your own selves, out of twelve only whom I have chosen out of all the people to be the apostles of my church, out

of your number, I say, one is a devil. How then can I expect to find unshaken faith elsewhere, when in one of you it will fail altogether, and in another, even in him who now has so earnestly declared that he can go to no one but to me, it will be sorely shaken in the hour of trial, and only my grace will save it?"

I think that these last words of our Lord, illustrated as they are by the story of St. Peter's fall afterwards, furnish us with one of the most important subjects of thought that could be presented to our minds this day. Surely they must be well fitted to dispel all confidence in our own strength. We stand here this day with a ready will, but the enemy is ever at the door, and before many days or many hours are past, he may find some unguarded point at which to enter, and the will which now seems so ready to do Christ's service, will become first sluggish and careless, and then treacherous and false.

For when this day and its services are over, there will come, it may be, upon some of us, a sense of relief and deliverance. Does it seem shocking to say so? Is it a monstrous thing to feel relief from the reproofs of conscience, deliverance from the burden of serious thought and prayer? Yet shocking as it is, the feeling is in human nature, and it has an innocent side as well as a sinful one, and by that innocent side it beguiles us. For after our Lord's long fast in the wilderness, the tempter did but say to him, "Command these stones to be made bread; thy nature must need refreshment, painfully stretched for forty days, let it now taste permitted relaxation; and He who gave bread and flesh, and water out of the stony rock to His people of old in the wilderness, will be most ready now to turn the stones into bread for His beloved Son, that His wearied nature may taste of his Father's goodness." And so in some sort the temptation comes

to us; our minds have been much interested, much drawn to serious things, much called upon to resolve, and watch and pray; nature requires a rest, for we cannot always bear strong exertion. So the rest as we call it begins, and we let our souls as it were go to sleep after their labour, and we give ourselves up to our lawful enjoyments with a free heart: suspecting no harm, we change the stones into bread, as the tempter bids us, and begin to take our pleasure. So we cease to watch: and what we called rest, instead of fitting us and strengthening us for work to come, steals upon us and makes us forget that we have any work at all.

There is always danger in these moments of recoil. In things not spiritual we know that after an examination such as is so soon to begin for some among you, the mind often flies back too vehemently when its work is over, and abandons itself to total idleness. After every effort there is always the notion that we have earned our rest. Although not put in words, there is, or soon will be, I doubt not, the feeling amongst many of you that by the preparation for confirmation and for the communion, you have earned as it were a season of indulgence, when serious thoughts should not be pressed upon you. As some have felt when Lent was over, after having kept it strictly, that now was their time to make up for their past severities, so many think that when the church's solemn services are over, it is hard to keep their minds still earnest; they would fain go and play unreproved.

And this, which would be a likely feeling to rise among you, even if it were now no more than the middle of the half year, is much more likely to possess you, when all things are visibly pointing to the beginning of the holidays, and to the full enjoyment which is commonly your portion then. You will have a greater difficulty, it may be, in

remaining faithful to Christ, from a circumstance which in itself is no fault of yours, nor can you at all help it: the circumstance, namely, that the holidays are so near. But this circumstance, like all others of the same kind, which make our duty harder or easier, is, in fact, God's will with respect to us. He wills that we should be so tried: and we may be sure that He is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tried above what we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way for us to escape, that we may be able to bear it.

And, therefore, I would earnestly advise you all, while the impression of this day's services is still strong upon you, to pray to God, each for yourselves before you sleep this night, that He will preserve you in the danger which threatens you. Pray to Him in so many words, that He will keep you through the business of this week, and through the pleasant expectations and enjoyments of the next; that He will graciously hallow both your work and your pleasure, and make both really work for your good; as all things do work for good to those who love God.

Pray to God this night, and pray to Him also to-morrow. When to-morrow comes, already the services of to-day will seem to have a little gone by; they will be numbered amongst things past. No examination for confirmation, no preparation for the communion, will be then immediately before you; but examinations of another sort, and preparations for worldly pleasures. How easily will that present drive out the past, unless Christ's grace preserves it to us! How readily will the mind turn in other directions, and the sun of our life will be veiled in clouds, so as neither to be seen nor felt. Pray that these clouds may not overshadow Him; pray that Christ may

be present with us in our labours of to-morrow, even as He has been present with us in this place to-day.

For indeed it is our privilege to be with Him ever, and to have Him ever with us; whether we eat or drink, or whatever thing, grave or light, we may be engaged in. There is nothing strange, nothing profane, nothing presumptuous, in praying that Christ may be with us in all those common works which our daily life here brings with it. I do not say that it is so easy to find Him in common places, as in this sacred place; or in common occupations, as in prayer and reading His word. Of course it is far less easy, but yet it is not impossible; and it is the great object of our finding Christ here; it is the great object of our receiving the holy communion, that we should so find Him everywhere. That we should enter, for instance, upon our work of to-morrow, as on a duty which He commands to us, and look forward to the enjoyment of the holidays, as on a pleasure which He gives to us.

And if any one were so to pray this day and to-morrow, and being careful, were indeed to go through his work and his amusements of to-morrow, as Christ's service and Christ's gifts; would not the difference in his own feelings, when the day was over, be very great, as compared with what he had ever felt before? Would it, indeed, be an irksome task, a painful constraint, to pray yet again in the evening that Christ would be present with him also on the morrow? Would he indeed shrink from rendering his account to Christ, if he could feel that he might render it with joy? Supposing his conscience were to say for him, I have tried to walk this day in God's sight; I have tried to do my work as Christ's service; I have striven to do it honestly and cheerfully, I have used no unfair tricks to give me an advantage over others. I have tried also,

when I was receiving the many pleasures of my happy life, —for we well know that our life here *is* a rarely happy one,—I have tried to think of them as Christ's gift, and to thank Him for giving them; and by so thinking of them, I have tried to keep them free from the many sins which often go along with them; from profane, or impure, or angry, or insulting, or teasing words; from all unkindness and bad temper, from all gluttonous or riotous excess. Supposing, I say, that any one's conscience could say this for him to-morrow evening, would such a one be unwilling to present himself before Christ? Would he omit his prayers, or hurry them over as a mere form? Or, would not he feel rather, that if he came before Christ, Christ would love him? Would not he be encouraged to pray again for the morrow? And if the morrow also were marked to the end by the presence of Christ's grace, would not the next night's prayer be still happier, and the resolution of the following morning be yet stronger?

And so, as I said yesterday evening, even within the next fortnight, before you leave this place for the holidays, you may feel quite certain that instead of having fallen away from Christ, you were actually nearer to Him, and more established in His service than you are this day. And if so, would it not be true also, as I said, that all the happiness of the happiest holidays which you ever spent, or could spend, would be tame and poor when compared with the joy of having truly walked with God, and having tasted Christ's Spirit? Nor do I say this on any supposition of illness befalling you. I do not mean only, that if dangerous or fatal sickness, such as we have seen amongst us, should be our own portion also, that then we should feel the happiness of belonging to Christ. We should feel it then, indeed, with unspeakable comfort; but I mean

much more: I mean that in your highest health, in your most secure prospect of earthly enjoyment at your young age, moreover, when the delights of life seem doubly delightful — even then, the joy of being Christ's servants, the sense that His grace had not been given in vain, that you were drawn more closely to Him, and were following Him in faith and obedience, would be keener and deeper than any joy which you had ever known before; and would convince you, by your own experience, of the blessedness of a Christian life.

May this experience be indeed yours, not at the end of the coming fortnight only, but at the end of many fortnights, and many months, and many years, — a rising in Christ's stature from the confirmation and communion of this day, to that eternal confirmation, and that perfect communion which Christ's redeemed enjoy in Christ's kingdom.

LECTURE XX.

TRUST IN GOD, AND FEAR OF GOD.

PSALM xxxiv. 8, 9.

O taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. O fear the Lord, ye that are his saints; for they that fear Him lack nothing.

THESE words, from one of the Psalms of this evening's service, appear to me to be suited at once to the great festival of the Church which we celebrate this day, and to our own situation also, as so soon going to separate for our accustomed holidays. For the words speak generally of God's goodness, and of the blessedness of fearing Him, and trusting in Him. They do not name any particular mercy, such as those which we commemorate on other festivals, our Lord's birth, when He became man, or His resurrection, or His ascension, or the descent of the Holy Ghost. But these and all other blessings which we have ever received from God,—our creation at first, our preservation daily,—our redemption once, our sanctification daily, —whatsoever good we have derived in body, or soul, or spirit, from Him who made us and redeemed us, and sanctified and sanctifies us. All these belong to the matter of this day's solemnity, which thus in a manner, as it is the last in order of all the festivals of the Church, is also the union and the crown of them all. Thus the words of the Psalmist have, as used on this day, a most comprehensive meaning. God's mercies, all brought together before us,

are indeed more in number than the sand; they can no more be counted than they can worthily be comprehended. And still more, if we would ascend from His mercies to Himself, the tongue and thought of man must utterly fail, and that in His divine existence, which is dimly shadowed to us by the representation of the Three Eternal Persons in one Godhead, like all the other truths which relate to God's nature, and not to his dealings with man, must of necessity be far beyond the reach of our minds to grasp it.

In this matter we must ever remember, that no man hath seen God at any time; that the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. The Father and the Holy Spirit we can know only by their works. Notion, conception, image of God, we can form no other than that of Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the image of the invisible God, and in Him is represented all the fulness of the Godhead until we shall know even as we are known.

We should bear in mind that the Scripture itself recognises the difficulty of considering God in His own nature, and therefore urges us to seek Him in and through His Son Jesus Christ. We do ill when we neglect the merciful help He has given us; when we would come, as it were, directly before God without our Mediator. Providence, the Supreme Being, the Deity, and other such terms, repel us of necessity to an infinite distance; they speak of One incomprehensible and unapproachable. Our God is the Lord, revealed to the Israelites as the God of their own nation, who came down upon Mount Sinai to give the law, who dwelt between the cherubim in the mercy-seat, in the innermost part of the Temple; revealed to us as the Son of Man, born of a woman, made in all but sin one of ourselves, living and dying and rising again, after the common condition of us all. This is our manifestation of God. To

Him we should come in faith and love, and He will show us of the Father, and give us of His Holy Spirit, in such measure as our present nature can bear, preparing us for a fuller revelation hereafter.

But, returning from that which is unutterable and incomprehensible in the truth which this day bears witness to rather than makes manifest; returning from the natural mystery of God's nature, to the Christian mystery; that is, the revelation of what He has done for us: — then we come to matters of which we can speak, and on which we can be understood; to truths capable at once of being known and loved. "Taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed is the man that trusteth in him;"—"Fear ye Him, all ye His saints." Here we come to matters not veiled within the heaven of heavens, but stretching from heaven to earth, to lift up earth to heaven; to thoughts, divine indeed, and high, and holy, but which, as I said before, suit our present condition as we are here assembled at this moment; the best charm which we could each carry with us when we go to our several homes, to bless our stay there and our meeting here again.

"Taste and see how gracious the Lord is." We may do this, it is true; but we may also refuse to do it. We look forward to many and great enjoyments, and in the common course of things we shall not, I suppose, be disappointed. There will be pleasure tasted, humanly speaking, by most of us, with very little effort or care of ours. It would be, therefore, a mere waste of words if we were to say to you, "Taste of pleasure, and see how sweet it is." But to say, "Taste and see how gracious the Lord is," is a very different thing from saying, "Taste of and enjoy your pleasure;" even although it is most true that that pleasure cannot come without God's permission. It cannot come without His permission; but it may well come

without his blessing. And, as I have often said before, if it come not with His blessing, it will come assuredly with His curse.

Therefore, try to consider the pleasure you are looking forward to as God's gift. Is it not so really? What hinders it from being so? It is not an unlawful pleasure, is it, that you should go home, and enjoy the happiness of home? It is not a forbidden pleasure to be with those who love you, and whom you love, nor to receive their kindness. The happiness which your earthly parents do not grudge you, is not grudged by your Father who is in heaven. He gives it to you freely to enjoy. What should hinder you from so receiving it?

Nothing, I do fully hope and believe, will hinder many from so receiving it. We drew near to God last Sunday, receiving together the holy communion; we prayed and resolved, and some of us, at the very least, will have prayed and resolved not in vain. What they wished and purposed last Sunday, they wish and purpose still. There is yet in them the frank confession of and turning away from sins past, the watching themselves lest the past sin should revive, the looking to Christ as the author and finisher of their faith, their help and strength from the beginning to the end. They have tasted, as I said last Sunday, they have tasted of His grace, I know, in far greater matters; yet let them not doubt, that He who gives to them Himself, gives all other things also. Our Lord said to His Father of His disciples, "Of those whom thou gavest me have I lost none." And the words, no doubt, were most true of the salvation of their souls, which Christ's care had kept. Yet does St. John acknowledge the fulfilment of the promise in a lesser matter also, when our Lord said to the soldiers who laid hold on Him, "If ye seek me, let these my disciples go their way." And even so those who have

tasted Christ's goodness in the strengthening and refreshing of their souls may well receive from His hand no less His gift of earthly blessings. "Taste and see how gracious the Lord is." He gives you the pleasure of returning home; He bids you enjoy as from His free love the cup of home happiness.

So receiving it, it is true of this no less than of spiritual mercies, that blessed is he who trusteth in Him. Home and its pleasures will not then spoil you, but soften and enkindle you for good. It will not be all receiving, drinking in some gratification or other, all the day, — drinking it in greedily, and angry if it be for a moment withheld. Whilst receiving pleasure you will be longing to give it, and because you long to give it, you will give it. The home circle which receives you so lovingly, and so largely ministers to your pleasure, will derive also in return a real increase of pleasure from you. Your coming back hither, if otherwise very unwelcome to you, will yet take another, and a better aspect, when you feel that he who has enjoyed is called upon to work: that he who has received much, should be anxious also to do something for others. If this place were much more disagreeable to you than I believe it is, still it would not be disagreeable to those who looked upon it as their appointed field, wherein they were to show forth their zeal for God. And how large a field is here offered for the display of Christian zeal, you know full well without my saying it. It is so large, that if there existed in any one of you an absolute enthusiasm of devotion; if your hearts were burning within you to do Christ's work; if even here, (the supposition is not an impossibility, for the thing has been,) if even here you were to be thinking of leading hereafter a missionary's life, and wishing that it were already begun; then I would say to you that it is begun already; that not

in India, or in the farthest parts of the earth, is the Lord's harvest more calling out for labourers than here, in this very place and school; that nowhere could souls be saved more surely, which are now in infinite danger; that nowhere could a larger increase of good be gathered, nowhere could Christ's grace be more glorified.

Nor will those who have tasted and are ready to taste again of God's graciousness, and of the blessedness of trusting in Him, be unwilling also to hear the Psalmist's next exhortation, when he says, "O fear the Lord, all ye His saints, for they who fear Him lack nothing." It was the last part of the prayer for those who were confirmed, that God would fill them with the Spirit of His holy fear, now and for ever. And though fear may seem but an unwelcome visitor, yet this holy fear of God, while it delivers us from all base and earthly fear, is in itself so joined with confidence and love, that it does but sober our hearts without making them unhappy. He who fears God will be certainly most likely to love Him also, and he will be free from all other fear in the world. And there is no one with so much natural or constitutional hardiness as to be altogether safe from other fear, unless he gives up also all hope, and makes himself like the beasts that perish. I mean that although some may imagine danger to exist where hardier persons see that it does not exist, yet if it does exist really and near at hand, then if the prospect of death be really opened before us, it is almost impossible, unless we have the fear of God, that we should not be tormented by the fear of death. This may be said of the boldest, but great courage is as rare as any other great virtue; the greater part of mankind do not possess it. Most of us are afraid often; our usual absence of fear arises only from the absence of danger. We are afraid

of sickness when we really think that it threatens us, because we are afraid of death; and any thing else which should bring death equally near to us, would be regarded with equal terror. And indeed this is very reasonable, if we do not fear God; for what courage, or what strength, or what wisdom can guide and support us in the hour of death and of judgment? We are going to that state in which we have no friends, and where we have laid up no treasure. We have no friends, because even if many of our earthly friends have died before us, yet we know full well that they cannot help us; either they have found one friend who is no friend to us, or else they are as destitute of friends as we are. In the darkness of that unknown world, the greater light does not dim the less, but it makes them visible. He who beholds Christ in death, beholds with Him also an infinite multitude of friends: the sky is as it were thick set with stars, one star differing from another star in glory, but all glorious; first the holy angels, then God's earthly children, Christ's redeemed who have gone before us. But if the greater light be hidden, the lesser lights vanish also; and not the faintest glimmer of the smallest star relieves the infinite void. We need not carry forward our thoughts to the judgment; death itself with its awful darkness and loneliness is appalling enough to us, if we have not learned to fear Christ.

But fearing Him we lack nothing, nothing in earth or heaven, in life or in death, in time or in eternity. That one most saving and most holy fear, the dread of His displeasure, the dread of not having Him for our friend and our Saviour, frees us of necessity from all fear besides. Nothing shall in anywise hurt us; for we are then Christ's. And the fear of Christ is but another expression for the fear of sin. If we would dread that as the great danger,

and shun temptation to it as the true infection, the infection which we really do give to one another, without any exaggeration of foolish fear; then we shall taste, without unwillingness or restraint, how gracious God is to us. We do each other far more harm when we are well than when we are sick; our laughter and our health and our enjoyment have in them a far surer and far wider spreading contagion than our weakness and our bodily disease. Fear this real infection—use precautions against it; carry about you, and never be for an instant without them, the drugs or scents which will preserve you from it. You are moving about amidst deadly sickness, the touch and the breath of infection are daily upon you; each has the disease in him, adding fresh poison to that of his neighbour. Yet those who would fly with the utmost cowardice from the fancied danger of the presence of bodily disease, even in the same neighbourhood, are bold and careless in the very midst of spiritual sickness; they infect and are infected daily. For this nevertheless there is a true security, not to be obtained by cowardice but by faith; the security of trusting that the Lord is gracious; that blessed are they who trust in Him, and that they who fear Him lack nothing.

LECTURE XXI.

MEETING AFTER SICKNESS AND DEATH.

PSALM CXIX. v. 176 or last.

I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; O seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.

ONCE more, after a separation of unusual length, we are here assembled; not all of us indeed, nor the largest part of our numbers, but yet we here form a congregation; the church in our house, if I may use such an expression, is come again into existence, bringing with it to all its members their various duties. And if we remember what cause has kept us apart so much longer than usual, and what circumstances of most unwonted solemnity marked or followed the time of our last dispersion, we shall all see that never did it more become us to make haste as it were to offer ourselves before the Lord; to utter our confessions, our prayers, and our vows, that at once and without any delay we may be His church, not in word only but in power, assembled into one congregation to promote His glory, and the salvation of our own souls.

Well therefore do the closing words of that Psalm which was read this afternoon in our service, become us all to use in the deepest earnest this day. They are that mixture of confession, of entreaty, of holy resolution, which should meet in our prayers. "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost," is the confession; "O seek thy servant," is the entreaty: "I do not forget thy command-

ments," is the penitent and holy resolution. Without some such resolution either conceived or expressed, there could indeed be no acceptable because no true prayer. To say, "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost," would be mere mockery, nay it would be like a horrible glorying in sin, if there was not at the same time in the heart the good purpose, "I do not forget thy commandments." But because that good purpose will not of itself prevail, but we should ever have to repeat in spite of it our confession of having gone astray like a sheep that is lost, therefore the entreaty for help is well interposed between them, and we say, and must say ever, "O seek thy servant." May thy help change my weak purpose into a strong and victorious resolution, that I may not go astray, but really and truly remember thy commandments, remember them to do them. Amen to such a prayer, may be well said by us all.

"We have gone astray like a sheep that is lost." It is the very language of the general confession of our Church service, yet some may think that it is too strong for all to repeat, that there ought to be some at least of Christ's people who abide with Him always, who, having been found by Him once, have gone astray no more. And doubtless our Lord's words to His apostles have been true of many since, when He said to them, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, and is clean every whit; and ye are clean, all except one." We may allow then thankfully, if we will, that all could not say continually that they "have gone astray like a sheep that is lost;" gone astray they have from the narrow road that leadeth unto life, but not far, nor habitually; they need not, to use our Lord's figure, save to wash their feet, and are clean every whit. Nay it is possible, very rare, doubtless, but still possible, that some having been brought to Christ in their infancy,

and having been trained up carefully from their earliest years in His faith and fear, have never within their remembrance gone astray from Him altogether, like the sheep that was lost. Yet even these must know enough of their own natural inclinations, and must be taught sufficiently by their actual faults, to be able to apprehend but too well the meaning of the words, even though in their strictest sense their own experience has been a stranger to them. If any one then amongst us has been so true to his baptismal covenant as to have walked with Christ all his days, surely his deep thankfulness to that mercy which has so kept him, and which has confined his experience of the words only to a light and partial sense, will lead him to join in the entreaty and in the resolution which follows with an earnestness, I had almost said, beyond us all. But for the most of us, are not the words quite true of some period at least within our memories? Are they not true of many periods, of some not very remote; nay, are they not true of the very time which has just now passed, since we met here together last? within the very last three months, have not many of us, — God knows who or how many, God knows and so do our own consciences if we ask them,—have not many of us gone astray, like a sheep that is lost,—ay, in all the fulness of the words? Have we not gone astray, not for a few minutes only, in some hasty words, or passing temper, but for hours and days, if not more? Have we not gone very far astray, out of sight altogether of our divine Shepherd, to a distance where we forget him entirely? Have we not lived just as we should have done if He had never died, or if we had never heard of His dying for us? We have gone far astray, living without God in the world, enjoying the things which He has made, but without their Maker's blessing. And here we are met again; and here in the mean time, while we

have been so living and so enjoying, sickness has been busy and death has come not once only, nor in one only form; and they have been taken away, of whom there was not the least likelihood beforehand that they would be called sooner than we; and we meet over their graves, they asleep and gone already to judgment, we yet alive, and shall I say living only to increase our account of evil, when we too shall be called to judgment as they have been? O no, no,—let me by no means have to say this either for myself or for you. Better, far better words the text offers us, which I pray to God may be said by us all in all sincerity: "O seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments." I see life and death before me, blessing and cursing; I see thy commandments, which I have so often broken, that they are holy, just, and true. Therefore seek thy servant, that I may do them; seek thy servants who have gone astray after their own fond devices, although thou didst purchase them to be thine with no less a price than thine own blood. Seek thy servants yet once again, and fill them with thy all-powerful spirit of faith, that they may overcome by it themselves, or rather the sin which has made them its slaves, and the world and the devil, that they may not forget thy commandments at all, but may study them, and love them, and keep them.

Such should be our prayer; but yet what is spoken thus generally must be brought out into all its particular meaning. We have gone astray, that is all that any other man can say of us altogether; but these words have to each of us, if we consider them, a much more distinct meaning; we can tell how far we have gone astray, and whither: in plainer language, we can each tell what have been our besetting faults, and what are our greatest dangers. And so again, when we pray to Christ to seek us, and to lead us in the way of His commandments; there too, we can

each tell what commandments we find it most hard to keep, and what most concern us in our own particular lives; and it is with respect to those especially that we should beg Christ to seek and to save us, and to grant us His strength now and ever.

If I endeavour to remind you of some of these things, I shall but say, indeed, what I have said before, perhaps said often; for how can it be otherwise? Your life here is but what it has been, what it has been to you, what it was to those before you. It is not changed, and if the picture of it be changed, it would only cease to be be a likeness. Yet it may be that at times we are encouraged to preach Christ's word more boldly than at other times; that sometimes the endless and measureless loss and gain of sin and of Christ stand before us as it were more clearly seen, that believing more keenly, we may speak less hesitatingly. Yet it is not we that speak, but much more those of our number, of our number in the largest sense; yours and ours, yours as scholars, ours as masters: those then, I say, of our number who within so short a period have been called away, who having been so lately alive, and with all life's prospects before them, are now, as I said, called away by their Lord and ours. They speak with an earnestness which will not bear our scrupulousnesses; if we say, this cannot be, it is vain to urge this; they cry aloud that it must be, for heaven and hell are on the issue. They call upon us for love's sake to keep back nothing that is profitable for you, to call you to follow Christ and nothing less without any reserve, lest you should die in your iniquity, and your blood should be required at our hand. They would say, are you Christians, baptized into Christ, called by His name, and brought up in Christian nurture; and yet, when you are in each other's company, what false shame comes over each of you that at night or morning, or

even within these walls, each is unwilling that his neighbour should hear him utter with his lips or declare by his bended knee that he is uttering to himself the language of prayer and praise? In this place, why are so many voices mute, taking no parts in God's solemn service? True it is that those who are very bad, if such unhappily there are, will be no better for speaking what their hearts do not join in; but are we all bad, is it in all of us a mockery? or if not, if we love our Lord, or if we wish to love Him, are we to keep silent, to seem ashamed of Him, to appear as careless of Him, because others may be indifferent or averse to Him? When we use the language of the Psalmist, or the hymns of the Church, doubtless it is sometimes far above our present state; but by using it, we declare no more than that we should wish to be able to use it worthily. He who pronounces aloud all the parts of the Church service which belong to him, does not say or imply that he is a worthy member of Christ's Church, but only that he would desire to become so. Or, again, I have urged at different times that you should cultivate the habit of praying alone, and reading the Scriptures alone, that you should try to be alone sometimes. And this I would urge as much as ever: but ought I not to urge also, that as you are not alone at those times when we are accustomed to say our latest prayers before we sleep, you should not then be ashamed of praying in the sight of one another, but that the shame should be his rather who did not pray. And should it not be his, and the deepest shame that he could be made to feel, if there really were any one amongst us who would refuse to pray? If there could be any such, which I do not believe, would he not indeed be unfit to live amongst us; would not his society be a taint and a shame to us; and ought he not to be made to know that it was so?

Confessing that we are Christ's, declaring that we must pray to Him, that we cannot live without Him; that we go astray like a sheep that is lost, and must therefore implore Him to seek us and to save us; confessing this with our lips audibly in this place, with our bended knees visibly before we go to sleep at night; shall we not then be more ready to follow Christ's commandments also without shame, and to do, or set ourselves heartily to do, all His holy and perfect will? Shall we then think that the commandment is too hard for us, that it is extravagant to press it, that some things must be allowed, the hardness of our hearts be sometimes indulged? I think that we should not think so at all, but rather that we should desire to be improved and built up more and more in Christian perfection; and that the word which called us to it was not extravagant; rather that the word which did not call us to it, was unjust to our sincerity; that we are hurt at its reserve, because it seems to suspect either our truth or our zeal; that we would fain know all Christ's pleasure, and strive and pray for His grace to do it. I think that we should feel so, and therefore I would urge you to make your confession of Christ freely and manifestly both here and amongst yourselves. The confession, the prayer, the resolution of the text, you would say at once that you ought to make them; make them therefore boldly. Confess that you are Christ's and would be so to the death, and then you will be glad to see plainly how Christ's people ought to walk, and will not be unwilling but rather most anxious to walk so yourselves in all things.

LECTURE XXII.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.

St. Mark vi. 34.

Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.

That all our Lord's miracles have not been recorded in the books of the New Testament is certain. Those which St. John notices are almost all omitted by the other Evangelists, and it appears by his own express words that He wrought many others at Jerusalem especially, of which we have no particular mention anywhere. What is true of our Lord's miracles, is true also of His teaching; we have in all probability only a part of it. The words which St. Paul quotes as spoken by our Lord in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," are not found in any of our gospels; and if St. John could record so many of our Lord's discourses, not one of which had been mentioned by the other three Evangelists, so we may be satisfied that many more might have been recorded, if it had pleased God, of which at present we have no knowledge. But yet we cannot doubt, that what God has been pleased to preserve for us contains a full specimen, if I may so speak, of all our Lord's teaching; it gives us something of what He said on

every point where it concerned us to be taught by Him; it gives us also the proportions of His teaching; by which I mean that it shows us what He laid most stress on, what He considered it of most importance to His disciples to have dwelt upon often. And when it is considered again, that our Lord's teaching by common consent is to be found only in the Scriptures; that in no book or record of any kind is any thing of it pretended to be given; there is an exceeding comfort in taking up that one small volume of the four Gospels, and considering that we there hold in our hands all that exists of the teaching of our Lord and Saviour, and that what we there possess, although He said, no doubt, a great many things besides, is yet a full impression of His mind respecting us; we have as to its virtue, though not as to its actual amount, His teaching perfectly.

Now the spirit and object of His teaching are given in the words of my text: "When Jesus saw the people, He was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things." His teaching then is the teaching of a merciful Saviour, and its spirit is compassion and tenderness: "When He saw the people, He was moved with compassion toward them." And its object is to save that which was lost: because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, therefore He was moved with compassion toward them, and began to teach them many things. It is not to make the wise wiser, or the good better, but to save those that were lost, to call the sinner to repentance. "The whole," said He, "need not a physician." By which, and other such words, our Lord meant to show, that in order to take His teaching rightly, we must know ourselves to be such as we really are, and such as His teaching supposes us to be. That is, in com-

ing to Him we must not fancy that we have a knowledge and a goodness, imperfect indeed, but yet of some value, and requiring only to be improved and strengthened. We must come to Him as being sheep without a shepherd, sheep gone astray; as sick men needing a physician; these are His own figures; or, without a figure, we must come to Him as having no knowledge as to the great matter of saving our souls; as having no goodness that can abide God's judgment. If we say that we see, our sin remaineth.

We must come to Him, you may say, but must we always remain so? Must all men to their latest hour whenever they read the gospels, consider themselves as still in the same condition as when they heard them first, as still straying without a shepherd, as still lost, as still knowing nothing, as still sinners? If they must, how can there be any reality whatever in much of the apostle's language, when they speak of the glorious liberty of the children of God — of their not sinning who are born of God? Or how could St. Paul have spoken as he does so confidently a little before his death: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith?"

Undoubtedly we may and ought to hope, that by long following Christ, by long clinging to Him, by the long indwelling of His Spirit, we may be changed into His image. Undoubtedly we may, and ought to hope that the time should come to each of us when we may be no more lost but found; no more sinners, but redeemed and holy. Undoubtedly there must be such a thing existing in the Church as the true testimony of a good conscience; there must be within possibility the witness of God's Spirit agreeing with our own that we are the children of God.

This is the blessed consummation of the life of faith,

which should be the highest object of our hope in this world. But it is the very essence of this consummation of our life, that we should have begun at the true beginning. "He who entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." In order that God's Spirit may ever bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, it must have convinced our spirit first of sin; it must have borne witness with our spirit, not once only, but long and often, that we were by nature, and are still by inclination and practice, the children of sin.

Therefore we need not trouble ourselves with the question whether we shall be always such as Christ's teaching in the Gospels with some few exceptions, perhaps, supposes us to be. It is quite sufficient to know that we all either are so, or have been so, and if we do not feel that we are so, nor yet that we have been so, then indeed we are not Christ's at all, nor can we yet become so. It is no vain preaching then, but a preaching which concerns us all, to dwell upon the great truth that Christ's teaching is the teaching of a Saviour, addressed in mercy to those that are lost.

And if it might be allowed for a moment to conceive our Lord on earth once again; if He saw us here assembled, saw us either within these walls, or elsewhere, at our business, or at our pleasure, do we really think that we should not awaken His compassion, that we should not appear in His eyes as sheep without a shepherd; but that He could say of us to His Father as he said of His eleven disciples, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word;" or that He could say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servants, ye have been faithful over a few things, I will make you rulers over many things, enter ye into the joy of your Lord"? Which

of these two can we believe would happen? For one of the two it must be, unless it were the more awful language: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." Would Christ our Lord, if we might conceive Him again on earth, would He have compassion upon us and begin to teach us many things; or would He bless us and encourage us only: or would He turn from us as from those who had hardened our hearts too long, and for whom there was no more mercy? Surely our earnest hope would be that we might awaken His compassion, surely it would be what we should most desire, that He might begin to teach us many things.

I think if we can in any degree realize to ourselves what I have been saying, it will show us with what feelings we ought to receive His teaching, which we possess actually in the Holy Scriptures. If we can conceive Christ present amongst us, His eye resting upon us, would any of the fond excuses or encouragements with which we now so often deceive ourselves, be able to deceive us any more? Would not conscience then speak out with a voice that would be heard, and say, "I have sinned"? He to whom all hearts are open looking upon us, He the expression of whose countenance is the image of truth itself, would it not be our happiness if that look was one of compassion? Can we dare to fancy that it would be one of approbation and of love? But indeed He is looking upon us, though not to us visible; indeed His eye is upon each of us; He regards every one of us with a look of compassion, or of love, or of judgment. Do we not pray, may we not believe, that it is still with His look of compassion?

But would He so look upon us if we were saved; if, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forward to those that are before, we were pressing on to

the mark, to the prize of our high calling? Would His look be one of compassion? He did appear to St. Paul more than once after his conversion; but His language was that of encouragement and assurance: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee." "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." When He had looked upon St. Paul with compassion, it was when He said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And so if He looks on us with compassion, it is only because we are still going astray from Him, because we are still as sheep without a shepherd.

This cannot be hard to put into that distinctly practical shape which immediately concerns us all. It is that we should consider what it is to be looked on by Christ our most merciful Saviour with compassion. How many things are then contained in it! Why should He look upon us with compassion, but because He knows to what end we are hastening? We are not sick, we are not hungry, we are not friendless, not in distress; yet still Christ looks on us with compassion; we are very cheerful, very lively, very happy; our looks are bright, our step is quick, all seems well amongst us; yet He to whom all things are known looks on us with pity. There is an evil about us then which we dream not of; a danger which we do not at all suspect. If Christ looks on us with compassion, ought we not to be afraid? Again, Christ looks on us with pity; we have been very ungrateful to Him, very unheeding: He has called, but we would not answer; yet still His look is one of pity. It might well be a look of anger, of judgment, but it is a look of compassion. That is, He still cares for us, He would that we should not perish, He would still be our Saviour. What a thing is it, that when Christ is looking upon us with pity, we should feel neither fear nor love!

It is a real truth, that Christ's eye, the eye of the Son of man, at the right hand of God exalted, is ever upon each of us; here, and when we go out, when we are abroad, and when we are within doors; when we are awake or when we are asleep; when we are alone, or when we are with others, Christ is ever regarding us. Think of Him when we will, and also at all times when we do not think of Him, still there is the fixed look of compassion, because we are gone astray as sheep without a shepherd. Let any one consider what it is to be so regarded by his Saviour, and then can he help turning to Him? Can he help running to Him with St. Paul's words, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And then He is ready to teach us many things; even the whole counsel of God. I will not now give you any particular instances of this teaching; for indeed you know well enough of what sort it is. If you ask in sincerity, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do," the same heart which prompts the question will directly suggest with it the answer. No, the difficulty is not there; Christ's teaching has been often enough in your ears to have made its way into your memories, if you at all care to find it there. I would add now no precepts, no rules, no mention of particular sins and dangers;—gladly, safely might I leave these to your own heart's reminding, if now, at this new beginning of our time here, we who have been spared to meet each other here once again in God's house and in Christ's presence, would consider that truly, really, and in very deed, Christ is looking upon us with compassion; that is, He knows our danger, and He desires to save us. Believe this to be true, as indeed it is, and then there is a faith in each of us which will bring us to Christ, and bringing us to Him in earnest will lay hold on His salvation.

LECTURE XXIII.

THINGS TEMPORAL AND THINGS ETERNAL.

St. Mark xiii. 31.

Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.

These words are nearly to the same effect with those of St. Paul where he says, "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." It is remarkable that the confession of this great truth has become so universal amongst all Christians, that it seems in consequence with many persons to be looked upon as a thing of course; and they who agree in confessing it are thought to be no more united by so doing in any Christian fellowship, than if they agreed in confessing some axiom of science or of common sense, which no man could dispute without insanity. And thus the great stress laid in the Scriptures upon the belief of our Lord's resurrection, is apt I think sometimes to surprise us. It seems so natural to us to confess that there is a life to come, that we almost forget that the knowledge of this truth was a matter of revelation, nay, that it was a thing which prophets and righteous men had desired to hear, and yet which in express terms they heard not. This has happened to us, because the great truth of the resurrection has never, I believe, been disputed in the Church, since the very earliest age of Christianity. There were some at Corinth in St.

Paul's time who said that there was no resurrection, but any later denial of it is scarcely to be found. So the truth being quite unquestioned, we confess it all as a matter of course, and it seems as I said to be no great thing to confess it. But here as in other things it holds, that between not questioning a thing or confessing it with our mouths, and really believing it, there is often a very wide interval. If it were really believed, there could be no doubt as to its importance, no doubt also that the holding this point in common is a very great bond of Christian sympathy. Indeed there is scarcely anything which would make so wide a difference between those who hold it, and other men; for in truth, to speak generally, the difference between those who believe it, and those who believe it not, is exactly the difference between the spiritually minded and the worldly minded, the difference between those who are seeking God, and those who are living after the fashion of the world.

Now, let us consider whether we do truly, and in the scriptural sense of the term, believe our Lord's words in the text: "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away." Here are two points declared to us, what will pass away, and what will not pass away, and the Christian's faith regards both of these together: it is of no less importance to believe in the perishableness of the one, than in the eternity of the other. We must remember this, even while we are considering the two things separately.

First, then, our Lord declares to us, "Heaven and earth shall pass away." By "heaven and earth" are meant this state of things of which we have experience, this earth as it is an habitation of human beings; the sun as it is a light to us, the moon and the stars as in any way connected with man. We know that we ourselves shall all

die; nay, we know also by past experience that nations many times die; and so far as it is a death to perish utterly from the knowledge of future ages, so there are many generations of the whole human race, which in this sense are to us dead.

But our Lord's words go further than this; they tell us that there will be an absolute end of all worldly things whatever, not merely great changes, partial destructions, and partial restorations, that some countries should be swallowed up by the sea, or covered with sand, that some languages shall cease to be spoken; but that all languages shall cease, all countries be desolate, all the human race come to an end. This certainly, and more it may be which we cannot yet comprehend, is contained in our Lord's words, that "heaven and earth shall pass away."

But yet I quite allow that this portion of the text without the other might, and I think would, have very little practical effect. For granting that heaven and earth shall pass away, and that our highest earthly labours are bestowed therefore on that which is perishable, yet still if this perishable is all that we know of, it becomes after all of very great and paramount importance to us; it may be but a poor thing to love, but love we must by the very necessity of our nature; and we must love this, if we know of nothing better. And therefore simple declarations of the perishableness of earthly things are really of no effect whatever. No man heeds them, or can heed them; for our nature repels them. The poor man's pittance is no less dear to him than the king's treasure is to the king, and reasonably, because it is his all. And so if this earth be our all, the knowledge that it were to perish to-morrow, would not, and I think ought not, to make us love it less fondly to-day. It is however altogether different when we take in the second part of the text, and are told that

Christ's words shall not pass away. For if there be any thing in the world eternal, then that which is perishable, even though it may last for many years, or many ages, must become infinitely insignificant in comparison. If all that we do or can love must perish together, our love for it may nevertheless be very intense; but if some of the things which we love will remain for ever, and some only perish, then the difference in the value of the two does become enormous. And so of our works: if some of them must pass away utterly, and some abide for ever, the glory and value of the first becomes as nothing, by reason of the greater glory of the second.

Now then, the two parts of the text so taken together, we do not commonly in the scriptural sense of the term believe. It does not signify whether we disbelieve both parts or one, or if one only, which of the two parts it be. But it does appear impossible that we could believe both, and yet could live as we do very often live, and love as we very often love.

For consider, if our Lord's saying be true, how very little difference there is between the oldest of us and the youngest. I am not at all considering the uncertainty of life; but take a person of twelve years old, and suppose that he will live till he is ninety, and take a person of ninety and suppose that he is to die next month. I ask what, if our Lord's saying be true, is the difference between them? Very great, if one half of it only be true; believe only that heaven and earth will pass away, and then the difference between twelve years of age and ninety is indeed enormous; one has spent his all, the other has nearly his all to spend. But how is it, if the other half of our Lord's words be true also, if there be something which shall not pass away? Then it is manifest that the difference between the boy and the old man is abso-

lutely nothing; its importance is just the importance of seventy-eight years compared with eternity. The boy can work, must work for this eternity, as much as the old man must work for it, I say, because all that he does affects his eternal condition for the better or for the worse. Neither is it true that the young mind is absolutely the slave of present things, and can in no degree live by faith. Offer a very young boy a week or a month of pleasure, and tell him at the same time that when the month is over he must go through a year of extreme hardships and suffering, is it quite certain that the present would so overbear the future, as that he would certainly embrace the offer? I do not think that he would, if he believed as firmly in the after suffering as in the present enjoyment. Neither do I think that we, whether old or young, should prefer the things which will pass away to the things which will not pass away; or that we should incur an eternity of suffering for the sake of seventy years of pleasure, supposing that they could be secured to us, if we believed as surely in the eternal things as in the temporal. I cannot but conclude then, that although we all confess with our lips the doctrine of the resurrection, and the judgment, and of eternal life and death, yet that we do not all really believe it.

Nay, I may even go farther and say, that practically we do not even believe, many of us, our Lord's first words, that heaven and earth shall pass away. Is it not even true that some of us scarcely seem to believe that we ourselves shall pass away? Is it not true that the sight of death, when it comes near to us, startles us as something utterly strange? It awakens us as from our dream that we should go on living as we had gone on; it brings us a book to read, the character of which we had till then never studied. And this same thing happens to the old some-

times, to all at least but the very old. The grown man too seems to have been dreaming that he should not pass away. Death is to him also no less wonderful than it is frightful. The perishableness of earthly things had not really impressed him, because he had not believed in the eternity of heavenly things. Indeed it is much the most effectual as well as the most profitable way, to endeavour to impress on our minds first that Christ's word shall not pass away, rather than that heaven and earth shall pass away. It suits us all better, and especially the younger part of us. Full of affections, full of powers, full of occupation, how naturally might we receive the tidings, that there are things to be loved and things to be done which shall never pass away. We feel strong, we feel active, we feel full of life; and these feelings do not altogether deceive us, for we shall live for ever. We see a long prospect before us, for which it is worth while to work even with much labour; for we are as yet young, and the past portion of our lives is but small in comparison of that which probably remains to us. It is most true; the past years of our life are absolutely beyond proportion small in comparison of those which certainly remain to us; God knows that the prospect before us *is* long; it is worth while to work for it. But in this long prospect One is all in all, whom in the short prospect of this earthly life we can contrive to escape from. With the things which shall not pass away, we cannot but combine the thought of God: He truly inhabiteth eternity. Conceive of things eternal, and we are at once in the presence of God. There is a love and there is a work which shall not pass away; a love which may be felt daily; a work which may be done daily. Surely this is very true of all of us; we do not live without loving some one, God forbid! but all our love, pure as it is, will certainly pass away if we do not love God.

Certainly there will be a time when those who do not love God will love no one at all, nor be loved by any one. Nor do we live without doing something; nor yet, even the happiest of us, without having something to bear. A work of infinite vanity, a suffering of endless increase, unless we work in Christ, and bear with Christ, and for Christ and through Christ; but a work never to perish, a suffering yielding a multiplied harvest of blessing, if we work and suffer as the heirs of life eternal; if we firmly believe that there are things which shall not pass away.

When I read this morning in the Gospel that the first and great commandment was to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, I could not but feel how that one commandment convinces us of sin. The first and great commandment of God so sadly broken! And if we consider, it is but too plain how, not loving God, we cannot bear to think of the things which shall not pass away, for there God is, and we cannot but see Him. And not believing in the things which shall not pass away, neither do we believe that other things will pass away; we live as if earthly life would last. Surely we shall try to awake out of this sleep; try to live unto God. And therefore surely we shall pray earnestly to God for His continual grace, seeing that without it our trying is the vainest thing in the world. Look at our own hearts, and what power do we find in them by nature of loving God entirely? But God raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; He has done so to thousands; nor yet is His arm shortened now. He will do it to thousands; He will give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, if we ask Him earnestly for the gift of Christ's Spirit. Seek the Lord while He may be found, and He surely will be found. Seek Him in prayer, and pray that He will reveal Himself to our hearts and minds; that He will teach

us to know Him and to love Him. Pray also that we may watch, that the enemy may not for ever find us sleeping; that we may some of us, as many as God's love shall touch truly, stand fast and grow up unto God daily, learning to believe more and more fully that Christ's words shall not pass away.

LECTURE XXIV.

THE SEAL OF THE SPIRIT.

EPHESIANS iv. 30.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

WHEN we read this and other such passages of the Scripture, so long as we do not think practically about them, they give us very little concern or perplexity; partly because we are so many of us so very indifferent to the sense of what we read, and partly because the meaning of the words historically, that is, as regarding the men to whom they were in the first instance written, may be made out very satisfactorily. But when we come to consider what is their sense to us, what they mean, not as St. Paul's words to the Ephesians, but as God's words to us; then when we begin to think distinctly about the question, it becomes very full of difficulty.

If we do not take the Bible as applying to ourselves, there is no use in our studying it. Good men have ever felt this truth; they could not bear to regard its words as

past, but as present; they could not consent to resign the whole interest in them to the church of one generation; they claimed a share in them for the church of their own days also; they felt that the words must be living oracles, ever flowing forth freshly from the seat of God's majesty, yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same; addressed to them as to their fathers, to their children as to them. Yet there was mixed with this most true feeling something of error. Not content with believing that the words were for them as well as for their fathers, they seemed to believe also that they stood to them exactly in the same position as their fathers had done; that as God's word was the same, so the church to which it was addressed was the same also. If a grace was spoken of as communicated to the early church, the same grace, it was argued, must be communicated now; and where no such grace was manifest, it was declared to be secret and invisible, because it was assumed as certain that it must exist. Then men began to speak of God's mysterious and incomprehensible working, how He exists all around us, yet undiscernible; how His secrets are far beyond our comprehension, yet their existence not therefore to be denied. A true language if rightly applied; and capable of ministering to our edification. A true language, if applied to what may be called our natural relations to God; for, in that state, mystery no doubt does surround us on every side; we know not what to affirm or what to deny; we can scarcely dare to say where God is, or where He is not, for our view is everywhere stopped by darkness. Neither is this darkness even now altogether supplanted by light: there is enough of mysterious and incomprehensible on every side of us to convince us of our own ignorance, to show us that, without a light vouchsafed to our path, we can tread in no direction far or confidently. But where the light is given, there

we see clearly, and in it is no darkness at all. It does not fill our whole world with light; it does not reveal all things, but where it does shine, there it does reveal. The mystery, the vagueness, the uncertainty which exist in other parts of our life, are banished where the sunshine of God's light is poured upon us. And so the Holy Spirit of God was pleased to reveal himself to Christ's church, as the Author and Giver of spiritual life, and also as the Author and Giver of many precious gifts which might minister to spiritual life in ourselves or others. So He exists in His church, and no otherwise. His manner of working is not revealed, and of that we can know nothing; but the fruits which He works, whether they be powers or graces, are things known, intelligible, perceptible; if there be no such fruits, the tree is not good, and if the tree be not good, assuredly the Lord and Giver of life has not visited it.

Therefore when we inquire what it is to be sealed by the Holy Spirit to the day of redemption, we may be sure that it is nothing vague, fanciful, mystical, but as befits the nature of a seal, something sure, positive, discernible. The Holy Spirit seals men by His gifts or by His graces, or by both. If we possess neither the one nor the other, we have not His seal; and there is then a difference between us and the Ephesians, of which it more concerns us to inquire the cause than to deny its existence.

Now the Holy Spirit's seal of power has been withdrawn from the church generally for many ages. It is withdrawn, that is, in the form in which it was manifested in the early church. Gifts clearly super-human, and showing to all men that the finger of God is amongst us, are not now vouchsafed to us. But that amongst God's people, what we call natural gifts may truly be regarded as gifts of the Spirit; that such gifts do, in many cases, correspond very

closely to the gifts mentioned in Scripture; that they confer a power more than other men possess, a power which we may use or abuse, a power which has its appointed work to do for the good of the church, but which may be wasted for mere personal display or advantage, this I think is most true: and this present form of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church may be a very profitable subject of our thoughts, and one which is too much neglected. Yet it was not strictly by the Holy Spirit's gifts, whether given in their present or in their ancient form, that either our fathers or we are sealed unto the day of redemption. We are sealed by them to a work of ministry, marked out as instruments to serve God's purposes, not as His children to share His blessing. St. Paul has said expressly that he might possess the most excellent of these gifts and the most wonderful, and yet be as nothing; and profited nothing to his soul's salvation. But gifts which do not profit for salvation cannot be the Holy Spirit's seal against the day of redemption, they cannot be the mark that we are God's children.

We seek then another sort of seal, and we find that there is one which has been and is the same from the very beginning of the Gospel. We find that it was and is impressed more or less faintly or strongly, more or less partially or completely, upon all God's people who have not cast off their faith and hope altogether. But whether it be impressed on us so fully and so strongly as that God will acknowledge us to be His at the last great day, that with many of us is the very main question which we have to answer; and therefore our business is to watch and pray that the seal may become broader and deeper upon us every year, that we may be God's certainly and wholly, and acknowledged to be so by Him at the last day.

But I must not forget one part of my text, which is at

once full of encouragement, and yet when we think of it is also exceedingly awful. We are told not to grieve the Holy Spirit by whom we are sealed. And in another place we are told that the Holy Spirit is in us. So that on the one hand, God so loves us that He dwells in our hearts to form us wholly to be His own. He so loves us, that if we sin, He is pleased to say that it grieves Him. This is a very great encouragement, for "if God be with us, who can be against us?" Yet, on the other hand, if we are the temple of God and profane ourselves by evil, then how great is that evil; and if we would not be saved with God abiding in us, and assuring us of His love, what other hope remains to us, or what excuse for our sin? Therefore they are very solemn words as well as encouraging, when it is said to us, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

They are indeed most solemn words, yet they do but agree with other language of Scripture. We are called Christ's body, we are said to be partakers of Christ, to be one with Christ. And this is not merely strong figurative language; it is the base of St. Paul's whole argument for the resurrection in the fifteenth chapter of the first Corinthians; if there be no resurrection of the dead, he argues, Christ is not risen: for we are so united and one with Him, that what has happened to Him must of necessity happen to us. This then is said of us, that we are members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit; and this, or other things equivalent to it, is said several times over. It is said generally of all Christians; all of us are partakers of these privileges, inasmuch as for all of us Christ died. It is said of persons who were not at all free from sin, not even from great sin; it is said to them at once to warn them and to excite them; it is said, it is a scriptural truth, that persons in whom there was much

of sin, are yet members of Christ, and that the Holy Spirit is in them. But is Christ therefore the minister of sin? God forbid! The judgment is not yet, and the privileges granted to us are not our final reward, but the talent given to us to improve it or to waste it. If any one be tempted to go on in sin, because though he be sinful he is now called a member of Christ, let him remember that he who had not on the wedding garment sat for a time at the same table with the rest, eating and drinking of the king's supper. It was only when the king came in to see the guests, that is when the Lord returns to visit His people, that he who was unworthy of the favours shown him was no longer suffered to abuse them.

So then when the Scripture says to us, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," this we may be permitted to give as the meaning of the words: the Holy Ghost has sealed you unto the day of redemption; you acknowledge at any rate that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and this is the Holy Ghost's teaching; you pray to God through Jesus Christ for spiritual blessings, and such prayer is of the Holy Ghost's inspiring; you wish to be good, and you abstain from many things that are evil; and such are fruits of the Holy Ghost's guidance. You belong to Christ's body, the church, and you share, therefore, in the privileges which Christ purchased for His church, with His own blood. But grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, lest His seal should grow fainter instead of deeper and plainer. While you have His seal of acknowledging Christ to be Lord, take heed that you acknowledge Him to be so not carelessly, nor with the tongue only, lest sin overgrow and efface the mark, or put upon it a deeper and more lasting mark of its own. While you have His seal of praying to God sometimes and not insincerely, take heed that these prayers be

not so unfrequent and so wanting in earnestness that they obtain no answer; and if to pray at all be a faint seal of the Holy Spirit, yet to pray and not be heard is a sure sign on the other hand that we are not God's children, that we are not one with Christ. While you have His seal of wishing to be good, of avoiding some sins, of doing some duties, take heed that the sins avoided and the duties done be not few in comparison of the sins done and the duties left undone; for to be full of sin is a sure sign that we are not born of God; for he who is born of God doth not sin, — not sin, that is, predominantly and habitually. While you have the Spirit's seal on you, do not grieve Him. It is to grieve Him, when you stop His blessed work in you; when you will not let Him deepen and widen the impression of His seal, but on the contrary make it fainter and smaller. It grieves Him when you go to rest at night less His than you were in the morning; when you come into this chapel one Sunday less His than you were the Sunday before; when you go home for the holidays less His than when you left home before; when you come back here after the holidays less His than when you went away from here at the beginning. He grieves to see you less His than you were before, — whenever you are not more *His*. He grieves over your unmarked hours and days and weeks, because He knows that the time which is unmarked by you is marked by your enemy; that when you sleep, then your enemy is most busy. He grieves over the weakness that will not be made strong, over the carelessness which will not be made thoughtful. He grieves over this, because He sees to what end it is hastening; because to Him that day is present when His work in our souls will be either perfected or altogether withdrawn; when if His seal be only faint it will be wiped out wholly; if we have not, even that which we have shall be taken

away from us. He grieves over this, and fearful indeed is the sin of so grieving Him. But if He grieves over our manifold faults and weaknesses, it will be a joy to Him no less, if we follow His guidance, and love His comfort; it will be a joy to Him, so He permits us to speak, if we suffer Him to finish His work, and to make His seal every year more visible on us: and if it be a joy to Him, His joy will be our infinite blessing; His finished work is our life eternal.

LECTURE XXV.

THE CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE.

COLOSSIANS i. 28.

We preach Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

IF any one thinks for a moment on the business of the Christian prophet or preacher, he will not wonder that even the great apostle Paul himself should have asked, Who is sufficient for these things? For first to comprehend and conceive in our minds the wisdom of God in man's redemption, is in itself a work passing human powers; and then to apply the truth in such a way as shall suit the different condition of different souls — to give to each that which it most needs, and when it most needs it, requires a knowledge of mankind generally, and a quick-

ness in distinguishing the various states of various minds, almost equally beyond man's capacity. Yet both these powers we need; we need to possess ourselves purely and fully of God's will for us and concerning us; we need also to be wise stewards of God's manifold grace, delivering to each that which he himself most needs; mixing warning and encouragement, teaching and mere reminding, in various proportions, even as each is by different persons and at different times required less or more.

And though in this particular congregation of ours, the preacher's work may seem to be in some degree easier, inasmuch as here we have a more distinct and personal knowledge of every member of our congregation than can in common cases be attainable; yet here with some advantages we are not also without some peculiar difficulties; if we know each of you, we know also how different you are from each other; we know also how hard it is so to speak to you as to seem at once earnest and not extravagant, so as by no ill-judged or careless expression to touch a different key in your minds from that which we meant to touch: a thing which with you, perhaps more than with most audiences, is a danger to be carefully guarded against.

For undoubtedly you have, not through any faults of yours, but through the circumstances of your condition, some of those points which create to the Christian lecturer the greatest difficulty. You are young, you are not poor, and, generally speaking, you know and have known but little sorrow. You have not in you, therefore, that conscious weakness which makes us so ready to receive help —so anxious to obtain it. We must try to win your attention by what we say, for there is not in you that which drives you to seek God's counsel and God's comfort, from the feeling that the staff of your own strength is

broken. And, therefore, thinking of all this, we seem even more than others to need the help of God's Spirit of wisdom, that we may be in any degree sufficient for the duty of our calling.

Thus on this very day, we scarcely know in what language most profitably to address you, whether to speak most to those who were with us this morning at Christ's holy table, or to those who were not there; and again, if we speak to those who were there, whether we should most speak in the language of encouraging or of warning. Yet, on the whole, I feel it most in my mind to speak in the tone of that solemn prayer which immediately follows the distribution of the bread and wine to all the communicants; to consider ourselves as those who have just been partakers of Christ's communion; to express our thankfulness, and to express also that devotion of ourselves to God, to which thankfulness naturally leads.

The prayer begins in these words: "O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants entirely desire thy Fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching Thee to grant, that by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in His blood, we and all thy whole church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of His passion." "We offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving," so we may say for you, so you may each say for yourselves: "We offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to Thee, O Lord, as for all thy other blessings to us, so for the means of grace which Thou hast this day vouchsafed us, and for disposing us to avail ourselves of it." For it is a blessing to draw near together to Christ's table, to be able to look around and think that we all are offering our heart's worship, that we are all at that time sincere, desiring to turn from sin,

anxious to gain God's pardon and God's strength. It is a blessing to feel that for once at least we have none near but friends; friends, I mean, to our souls' health; friends who would help rather than hinder us, because they desire themselves to be helped and not hindered. And it is a blessing to draw near to Christ in His appointed way; to be certified by receiving the signs of His body and blood, that as He died for us once, so He liveth for us now and for ever; that He still counts us as His, inasmuch as He grants us to be partakers of Himself. For setting aside individual wilful unworthiness, and surely the holy communion was meant to be an abiding sign of Christ's love to us, that as we received into our bodies the bread and wine, which are the signs of His body and blood, so He would enter into our spirits by His Spirit, and so become partaker in us, that we might become partakers in Him. And, therefore, we may well offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God, for having disposed us to come to Christ's holy communion.

And not less should we humbly beseech him to grant that by the merits and death of His Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in His blood, we and all the whole church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of His passion. For though the holy communion be a means of grace, and a lively expression of Christ's continued love to us, yet is our salvation not to be found there; it is not the signs of Christ's death which can save us, but His death in very deed upon the cross once for all; nor can we lay hold of our salvation by receiving the signs of Christ's body and blood with our bodily senses and members, but by receiving the truth and efficacy of His real death into our hearts, not by any outward act, but by faith. Our work is not done when we have received the holy communion; our justificatiou is not there. Therefore we pray immedi-

ately after our thanksgiving; we thank God for the help which He has given us in the holy sacrament, but we pray that that help may help effectually, that it may help us to the true spiritual partaking of our real redemption, to a faith in the merits of Christ's blood, not as shadowed in the wine of the Lord's supper, but as shed from His own body on the cross. For there and there only is the life of the whole world to be obtained, not bodily, nor by any bodily means whatsoever, for the Son of Man is ascended up where He was before, and after the flesh we know Him on earth no more; but to be obtained by another means, which can make the past as present, and the distant as near; by that faith which sees the invisible, and apprehends the spiritual; which in every age and in every land can reach back through eighteen hundred years, and stretch itself over interposing seas and lands, and can take to itself its own portion of the redemption purchased for us all on the cross upon Mount Calvary, and can make Christ's death a real and a present thing, and can believe unto life eternal.

And now, and only now, can the church offer her sacrifice; her spiritual sacrifice, the sacrifice of herself. Not in the communion, nor by virtue of the communion, but through the merits and death of Jesus Christ, and through faith in His blood, the church is purified, is become acceptable to God, and may offer her daily sacrifice. And hear what it is, and O may God the Holy Spirit dwell in our hearts, and giving us a lively faith in Christ our Saviour, dispose and enable us to join each of us in this Christian sacrifice. Hear the words of oblation with which the church offers up herself: "Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto Thee, humbly beseeching Thee that all we who are partakers of this holy communion may be fulfilled with Thy grace and heavenly

benediction." "We offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies," this is our sacrifice, daily and continually to be offered; our Christian sacrifice, which no other priest but we, each for ourselves, can offer; our spiritual sacrifice—not of brute creatures which know not God, nor of things first slain and laid upon God's altar, when their life is ebbed away,—but a reasonable sacrifice of our reasonable minds, of our fancy, of our imagination, of our judgment, of our reasoning, of all the faculties which God has given us to know truth and to know Him: and a holy sacrifice of a penitent heart washed in Christ's blood, of a believing heart, of a resigned heart, a self-denying, an obedient, and a loving heart: and yet again a lively sacrifice, a sacrifice of powers and feelings and hopes, not dead, nor doomed to die, but living, and to live for evermore, through the powers of Christ's spirit, and the virtue of Christ's offering.

This was our sacrifice which in our words this morning we declared that we offered. May those words have been truly spoken, as I think they were; may they also be faithfully kept! We offered and presented unto God ourselves, our souls and bodies; we offered them, not for that moment, but as our constant sacrifice, to-day, to-morrow, and to our life's end. We offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies; we have, as far as words go, kept back nothing. Our bodies, with all their various senses and powers, we sacrifice, so we say, to God; we sacrifice them, a living sacrifice, not to be destroyed or dishonoured, but to do God active service. Our bodies so fearfully and wonderfully made; our eyes, our ears, our busy tongues, our active feet, that vigour which youth feels in all its frame, and which makes the very sense of life a pleasure; these we offer and present to God. Should the body which we have sacrificed to God be polluted with intemperance, or

be wasted with indolence, or allowed to run freely after its own pleasure? O that we would remember every day, we whose bodily powers in most of us are so healthy and so vigorous, that we have offered them all to God. Should the tongue which we have offered to God utter lies, or impurities, or unkindness? Should the feet which are God's run to evil; the hands which are God's be made to minister to violence?

And so in like manner we have offered up our souls, hopes, and fears, desires and affections, powers of knowledge, powers of loving and of enjoyment. We have offered them all to God. If we are clever, shall we waste our talents for the gratification of our own vanity, or for the support of wickedness or falsehood? If we hope, shall we hope for nothing but selfish pleasures? If we fear, shall we fear nothing but selfish or worldly pains? If we love, shall we love ourselves most, our friends a little, and God not at all? Yet for every faculty of our nature God has an appointed work to do. Here also what we offer is a living sacrifice, we do not mean to destroy our powers and our feelings; desire may live, hope may live, reason may live, love may live, but they are to live as holy, as God's ministers, as working God's work. They are by no means to be dead, not at all to be idle; there are to be found things true, things honest, things just, things pure, things lovely, things of good report; virtue there is, and praise, the reward of virtue, to be desired both from God and man. These are their food, the fruits of God's spiritual Eden, prepared for His regenerate children, for those who have made themselves soul and body no longer their own, but Christ's.

To this sacrifice of ourselves we pledged ourselves this day at Christ's holy table. Surely we may rejoice earnestly that so many were there thus to pledge themselves.

We may rejoice in this and be very thankful for it, provided we are only not over-confident. It must be a great pleasure to me to see many of you at the Lord's table; I feel sure that it comes of good, and I trust and believe that it will lead to good. But we must never indulge ourselves long in self-congratulation; it is neither safe nor right to do so. We have all our onward progress to think of. If we stop for more than a moment to rejoice that we have come so far, we slip back again, and lose the ground which we have gained. That there is good working amongst us, I most thankfully believe; take care that it is not dimmed or quenched by any presumption or carelessness; take care that you do not value it too highly. But our daily sacrifice is not a little thing, nor to be offered without constant prayer and constant watchfulness. Let us watch and pray, that we may pray always, and watch always. God will help us; Christ will strengthen us: His holy communion is the pledge that He will not forsake us, unless we obstinately forsake Him. May we go hence to our several works, to the overcoming of evil in ourselves and others, to the devoting ourselves and all our powers and feelings to Christ our Saviour.

LECTURE XXVI.

IDOLATRY.

PHILIPPIANS i. 9, 10.

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

THESE words agree entirely with that language concerning the excellency of wisdom, of which we have heard so much in both the lessons of this day's service, taken from the Proverbs. And words to the same purpose occur in many other parts of St. Paul's Epistles. Nor is this to be wondered at, for no one can pay any close attention to the conduct and character of others, without being aware that one of the very most fruitful causes of evil in them is the want of wisdom; some one or other of those defects which go to make up what the Scripture calls folly. By which of course is not meant a weak state of intellectual faculties, such a state being wholly out of our power to remove; but it means the not using those faculties which we have, or the not using them rightly; so that by this neglect the faculties, whether naturally strong or weak, fail of effecting their appointed purpose; they do not lead us to knowledge and judgment, nor to approve the things that are excellent; and thus we are not sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, but defiled with many great faults, and by these

faults tempting and hindering others no less than ourselves.

The words "to approve the things that are excellent," occur again in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It is mentioned as one of the boasts of the Jew that he knew God's will, and approved the things that were more excellent. In both these passages the meaning is the same: what the Jew boasted that he did, what St. Paul prayed that the Philippians might do, was, that they might be able to distinguish between right and wrong; and so distinguishing, might avoid the wrong and choose the right. It follows from St. Paul's language, that this is a thing of some difficulty; of difficulty, I mean, even in the discerning or distinguishing what was right, without speaking of the difficulty of practising it.

But in a great part of our conduct the whole difficulty consists in practising what is good, there is none at all in distinguishing it or making it out. Good and evil, in most common cases, are plain enough to be seen: we do not mistake the one for the other; the fault is wholly in our practice; we knowingly leave good undone and do evil. But there are also many cases where it is otherwise, and where before we come to the difficulty of right acting, we have a previous difficulty to overcome in the right judging. And here it is that St. Paul's prayer for the Philippians applies to us also. We need God's help in order to distinguish and approve what is really excellent.

Now what hinders us from doing this when we set about it, is always some one or more kinds of idolatry. I say, when we set about it; for I am not speaking of those who never think seriously at all, and who live merely at random. But what hinders persons with any degree of seriousness and sincerity of character from distinguishing rightly between good and evil, is always idolatry. There are some

it is likely, who, when they read so much against idolatry in the Old Testament, and so much about the worshipping of strange gods, and of many gods, and find this regarded as the greatest of sins, consider that such parts of the Bible belonged only to times past, and that idolatry was the sin indeed to which the Israelites were most exposed, but not one from which we are in danger now. This mistake arises from confounding idolatry with image worship, — the sin forbidden by the first commandment with that forbidden by the second. The difference between them is very great and palpable. He who were to represent God in the shocking way that He is represented in some old pictures, and make an image of Him like the form of an old man, and then to worship God under that image, would certainly be guilty of image worship, but not of idolatry. Whereas, he who prays to the Virgin Mary, or to the saints, though he may have no image of them at all, is equally guilty of idolatry. What he worships is not merely an unauthorized representation of God, but it is not God at all; and the sin of idolatry is the reverencing or worshipping or loving another in the place of God. And thus St. Paul tells us more than once, that covetousness is idolatry. Nor is this a mere figurative way of speaking: it is idolatry; not image worship, but idolatry, really and truly. The covetous man loves and trusts in his riches more than he loves and trusts in God. He gives to them his heart, and not to God; and this is not figuratively but truly the sin of idolatry. In the same way there are many other things which different persons honour and love and obey excessively; and in each case there is a different sort of idolatry it is true, but all the cases are idolatry. And therefore the large portion of the Old Testament which speaks of the sin of idolatry, so far from not concerning us, does in fact show us how completely it is the sin

which does so easily beset us. It is merely the form that is altered, not the reality. And here too we may apply to the Old Testament our Lord's words, that not one jot or one tittle should pass from the law till all be fulfilled.

But more may be said than this. The ancient idols were so numerous, that it was said by the prophet, "According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah." And so are they no less numerous now. For take any congregation, and we shall not find that they worship the same idols; on the contrary, it may almost be said that each man worships his own. There are a great variety of notions, of persons, of things, some of which are the idols of one man and some of another, none of them being worshipped by all alike, and some one or two perhaps worshipped by a very few, nay, worshipped, it may be, by no more than one single person in the same manner and with the same exclusiveness.

Now our idols, whatever they may be, hinder us from approving the things which are excellent. They make us believe that our service to them is a true worship, and therefore we give a larger place to it in our hearts and lives than we should do. It takes the place of some duty which ought not to be so neglected; it makes us judge the worse to be the better, and the better to be the worse.

Various instances of this might be given, and almost every different congregation might require different examples. But we are not concerned with other persons' idols; our concern is to know what are our own.

What are the things, which being loved by us or feared, or reverenced more than they should be, become to us idols, and hinder us from discerning the things that are excellent? And certainly it is not difficult to find out one of them which is very generally worshipped, and this is the

praise or the dispraise, the liking or the disliking of those around us. I know that this is an idol in many other places beside this; but it is neither so general elsewhere, nor is it nearly so mischievous. But here it is a very dangerous idol, and one which persecutes bitterly those who will not worship it. It says, "I approve of many things which God approves of, and I condemn many things which God condemns. Worship me, therefore, and I will guide you, and will reward you if you do well, and punish you if you do ill." Truly this is no deaf and dumb and senseless image, which could do nothing to its worshippers either of evil or of good. It is a real and living and mighty power; it can affect our condition beyond all doubt for good and for evil. And thus many of us follow it altogether, and would be afraid either to do, or to leave undone, a single thing which this idol forbade or commanded. It is a constant worship; every day, and every hour of every day, it presses on our service. Who is not afraid to do what those around him despise or condemn? Who is not desirous of doing what all about him love and honour?

Now first of all it should be said plainly that even where this idol is as much like God as it ever can be in this world, still its worship is idolatry. I mean that if the church were in the greatest state of purity which we can conceive ever attainable, so that our brethren around us did speak very generally the language of Christ, approving truly what Christ approved, condemning what He condemned, yet even then the looking to its approbation or to its censure would be dangerous, would have a tendency to become, and very easily might become idolatry. For no man or set of men may be to us in God's place, nor can claim from our conscience that its account should be rendered to them with the same submission to their judgment which it owes to God's. However great, therefore, may be the respect

which the opinions of those around us may claim from their general agreement with Christ's judgment, still the independence of our consciences ought fully to be maintained, and the feeling should never forsake us, that we must seek God ourselves, and not through another, that to Him and to His judgment we must in the end commit ourselves, and to Him who is alone the infallible interpreter of that judgment, His Son Jesus Christ.

But if the praise of men in man's most perfect state is still apt to become an idol, what is to be said of it here, when its language, so far from being entirely one with God's, differs from it, to say the very least, in as many points as it agrees, and this palpably even to the commonest understanding, insomuch that, as I have said once before, if any person, while trying to deceive himself that he is doing what is right, because he is doing what will make him popular, or save him from being disliked; if any person, I say, were at such a moment to ask himself what Christ would have him to do in the matter, the bandage, so to speak, would in an instant fall from his eyes, and he would at once discern what was right and what was wrong, whether he had the firmness to follow it or no. It was said in the old church, that the pronouncing the name of Christ, or the making the sign of the cross, drove out the evil spirits from those whom they had possessed. And truly the very name of Christ and the thought of His cross would drive the evil spirits out of our hearts now; the lie which the idol had taught us, the veil which he had drawn before our consciences would be rent in twain from the top to the bottom; what we had been persuading ourselves to call, according to our idol's language, good-natured, or honourable, or spirited, or any other such term, becomes, when seen to us in the light of Christ's name, cowardly, weak, disobedient, undutiful. And what we had been re-

solving to call tame or mean spirited, or harsh, that we recognise, when the light of Christ's cross falls on it, to be the courage of those who fear him only that can destroy both soul and body in hell, the firmness of Christ's soldiers, who are pledged to strive against the world and the devil, even unto blood.

True it is that, in deeper cases of self-deception, Christ's own most holy name may not dispel the darkness of our conscience, but even thicken it: it is possible, and it has been known, that men have in Christ's name blasphemed Christ's Spirit. But not so with us; our temptations here are mercifully suited to our strength; they affect our practice, they threaten our principles, but as yet they would flee before the thought of Christ: the deceit which they put upon us is so gross that it is convicted in a moment, when the light of Christ is held up to it. And when I see many of you attend the holy communion, what is my reasonable hope but that you are desiring and proposing to submit your lives to Christ's judgment — that in questions of conduct, if any doubt or temptation arises, the appeal will be at once made to the light of Christ's will, and to the strength of Christ's Spirit. With this hope, knowing that such questions as may come before you are clear as day when this guide is consulted, we are led to believe further, that the will of Christ will be more and more obeyed, that your idols will be cast away, that there will be the power seen of discerning between good and evil. If, on the contrary, experience shows that Christ is not referred to, that the idol's lying voice is alone listened to, even by those who have had their hands on Christ's table, and we are sure not then with any treacherous purpose of betraying Him, must there not be a great disappointment, a wholesome it may be, yet a bitter humiliation, that while we perhaps were exulting, perhaps

were beginning to feel proud, at the number of those who were openly professing themselves to be Christ's servants, the enemy laughs at our rejoicing, and sees that he can take away in an instant the seed out of their heart, and can keep Christ's name out of their sight, and can palm his own lies upon their conscience, and can make them do his bidding and serve his cause?

He will not indeed venture to do this openly, nor in a great matter, where the conscience must be awake: he does not tempt to manifest and gross sin, nor ask those whose vows were so lately uttered at Christ's holy table to lie, or to be cruel, or to be drunken, or to be profligate. But he overthrows Christ's habitual dominion over the heart: he takes care that we shall not do common things in Christ's name; that in what we think little matters we shall not be guided by Christ's will: and He who by His apostle commands us to do every thing in the name of the Lord Jesus, He knows that by forgetting Him in what we call little matters, and allowing ourselves to violate our duty, we give place to his enemy in our hearts, and incur the danger of listening to him in a greater matter hereafter; if indeed we do well to talk of great or little, when we know that all our actions are either acts of faith or acts of sin, and that no act of faith on the one hand, or of sin on the other, can properly be called little by those who know that for their sins Christ died, and that by faith they are justified through Christ to life eternal.

LECTURE XXVII.

CLOSE OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

St. John vi. 12.

Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

He who made all things once by His infinite power, and had again by His power, now freshly exercised, made food where there was none, to feed five thousand men in the wilderness, He yet desired His disciples to gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost. It was in the same spirit that He told them that not a sparrow fell to the ground without their Father; that the very hairs of their heads were all numbered. And if He thus values the food of our bodies, and knows the number of the very hairs of our heads, still more will He value the bread that is the food of our souls: still more does He number and prize every little spark which He may find in us of spiritual life. And in this sense I would understand His words to-day; first, as addressed to ourselves, charging us to gather up every fragment of the bread of life; next, as addressed to His angels, bidding them to gather together, and to note against the last day whatever signs they may have seen in any of us of our being endowed with spiritual life. First, then, the words are spoken to us all: they bid us now, at the end of the Christian year, to gather up the fragments of spiritual food which may have been scattered in our way in the course of the year, — to gather them up

in our memories, to consider whether, if they have been hitherto disregarded, they are not yet too precious to be utterly lost.

And when I speak of fragments of the bread of life, it is manifest that I mean to speak not so much of regular ordinances, of God's word read or preached to us in this place, or of other opportunities which may have been given to us of regular prayer. Such things are our appointed spiritual food, and not fragments merely. But I mean by "fragments," means of grace which have been given us as it were accidentally, and arising out of the circumstances of our several lives; for we have each, unless I am much mistaken, received helps of this sort: lessons which came when we looked not for them; lessons which might have profited us at the time, but which it is not too late to remember, and to derive profit from even now.

By the very nature of the case, then, many of these can be known only to our several selves; and what or how many of them may have happened to each of you I know not. Nay, so soon do we forget what is once past, that I doubt whether at this moment you know yourselves. But some such each of you could gather up, beyond all doubt; and here too the word is true, "Seek and ye shall find." And surely we ought, from time to time, to require of our memories that they should keep watch over the portion of our lives that is past, that as nothing in them is forgotten before God, so all that is in them may not be forgotten by us. It cannot be safe or right, even in the youngest of us, to let our days pass away into utter forgetfulness; life hurries on with all of us too rapidily; the days of which it is so fast robbing us must not be lost altogether.

Consider, first, whether any great change has taken place within the last year in the state of our own imme-

diate families. Such changes we cannot fail to remember, if they have taken place: to the question, whether any such have happened, it must be easy to answer yes, or no. And a great many of us perhaps might have to answer no; that is, death may not have taken any near relation from us, nor birth added any to us; fortune may not have altered either for the better or for the worse; we may be living as we have lived, and in the same place where we have lived. But surely if this is so, it is in itself some thing to remember: if it be so, this very pause and quietness in a life so full of change as ours, is in itself remarkable. Assuredly it cannot last; some change, great or small, must be expected soon. Meanwhile, in this congregation, we are justified in supposing, that a state which has known no change must be, generally speaking, a state of considerable comfort and enjoyment; a state of great outward peace: a state, therefore, in which we might have served God thankfully and without distraction. If it still continues, let us now at last consider it, and remember how great a claim it is upon us for our grateful services.

And so, if changes have happened, that also can be easily recollected; and every such change brought with it an opportunity of good, which we might have used, although perhaps we did not. Blessings unthanked for, warning unheeded: these things should be recalled to mind, that we may be thankful or careful now. For probably the change still continues, so that it is a thing which still reads its lesson to us; and we shall not doubt, I think, in any of our own particular cases, what the lesson is.

Again, we can remember whether any change has happened to our very selves: such as a change of stature, a change of health and strength, a change of tastes and pursuits, a change, in short, of any rememberable kind, in our

bodies or in our minds, in our natural and intellectual part, or in our spiritual. Can we do more than we could do a year ago, or can we not do so much? Is there any pursuit which then we were very fond of, and which now we do not care for; or, contrariwise, for which we are very eager now, and a year ago were wholly indifferent to it? Are our hearts harder or tenderer? Are we nearer to God or farther from Him? Gather up now all such consciousness and recollections, and consider to what they urge us. Surely this everchanging being of ours requires to be watched carefully; in one year it has been brought, and brought unconsciously, to a state different from what it was a year ago;—mightier changes than these will be wrought in us; changes too most certainly for evil, if they too are allowed to come as they list, without our thought or labour. Remember, in this one year, we see a type of our whole existence, for ever growing or for ever decaying; laying aside or learning to feel some aversion or some love for evil or for good.

Yet, again, we may look beyond ourselves and our own families, and see whether, if we have not experienced ourselves, we yet have witnessed in others any remarkable change; and here the view will be to each of us wider or narrower, according to our knowledge, yet it will offer, I think, some objects to all of us. To all of us here it must certainly; for we have all seen serious changes occurring within our own observation: it is impossible that the last year can be to any one of us devoid of events well deserving to be recalled to our memories. And here, too, the lesson spoke loudest, perhaps, at the time when the events happened, yet they remain now and will remain for ever unrecalled, and their lesson is still with them. It is still as true as it was some weeks or months ago, that those have died within the last year, who last Advent Sunday were

sitting among us as full of life and as full of happy prospects as the most sanguine of us can be now. It is still true, that since that time they have gone, not one or two only, but several, to that place where the fragments of God's grace, which have not been gathered up before, must now be lost to us for ever.

Let us take the words then in their second sense: as Christ's command to His holy angels to gather up and record in their books of judgment whatever fragments of spiritual life may have manifested themselves in any of us, during the course of the last year. Yet, what a condition is it, if fragments of spiritual life are all that have appeared in us. For in Christ's servants, their true life, their life which they derive from Him, is not a faint spark seen here and there, a mere light in a dark place which it cannot enlighten; but it is a brightness clear as the brightness of the sun, which shines through the whole nature, the abiding sign of God's presence. What, therefore, is our state if there be nothing of this in us, but only a few sparks, or at the most a few flashes, which went out in an instant? What must it be even more, if not so much as these fragments are to be found in us?

This, surely, is a consideration of the greatest importance to us all. If we were to be called now as others have been called, what would the year past, the last year of our lives, as it would then have been, which determined our state for ever; what record would it have to present to us? Much, it may be, which has passed within the last twelve months, we cannot now remember; there is no other record of it in existence but God's only. Yet, much also we can remember; much we can at this moment feel, quite enough to enable us to say whether our actual condition claim our most earnest thankfulness, or our lively hope, or our fear and shame, or our repentance and confusion of face, stopping short only of despair.

For those whose spiritual life is predominant in them and habitual, who feel that sin is more hateful to them than it was twelve months since, and Christ far dearer: who feel, too, that sin is overcome by them more frequently and more easily; who assured by the testimony of their conscience that their faith was stedfast, might hear without alarm the call which has been heard by some of their brethren; and might lie down on their beds to rise no more in this world, with an assured hope that they were Christ's in death as in life; for them there has been more than a gathering up of fragments; it is for them only to follow the example of the apostle, to forget the things which are behind, and to reach forth unto the things which are before, and so to press forward for the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus. But for those who are far less blessed, with whom sin has striven far more successfully, who have not won their victory, nor seem yet to be winning it; for them it is an anxious question, what fragments of life could be gathered up from the past year; what signs that, if they were not victorious, they were not yet wholly vanquished, but were still struggling against their enemy. Do God's angels, as they watch this struggle, regard it now with more of hope or of fear, than they regarded it a year ago?

What has been the effect of all that has happened to us, either outwardly or inwardly? Have we prayed the less or the more? For where spiritual life is not predominant, the best sparks and fragments of it which can be found are our prayers, if they have been frequent and earnest. For such prayers show that we have known our danger and have dreaded it, and have desired to escape from it. What number, then, of prayers spoken from the heart, could the angels record of us from the past year? Or, again, what fruits could they find of such prayers? What evil habit

overcome or weakened, what sin laid aside, what temper corrected, what generous or humble or kindly feelings entertained, what deeds of positive and willing duty rendered to man or to God? Do not be afraid of remembering such, lest they should make you proud: you are far more apt to be proud if you do not remember them. I mean that pride belongs to our common state; if we do not look into our hearts at all, we are quite willing to take it for granted that we have much to be proud of. But the actual search, and the finding some few fragments of good amidst a wide waste of unfruitfulness or of sin: if this makes us proud, we must be mad. Much rather, as I believe, would it fill us with humility, to see how little of good our careful search could discover, yet with hope, with zeal, with gratitude to God, that we had tasted even thus slightly of His gracious promises, that we had found Him faithful when we had turned to Him, that He had given us an earnest of what He would do in us more perfectly, if our faith and watchfulness had been stronger. Yes, remember, I entreat you, whatever good thing has appeared in you; observe it well, weigh it, value it, and you will surely see how little there is in it to make you proud, how much to make you penitent and yet thankful, humble and yet full of hope.

So, gathering up the fragments which remain, let us pray, ere the new Christian year dawns upon us next Sunday, that beginning with these we may be enabled so to add to them by Christ's Spirit, that our account next year may speak of more than scattered fragments; may bear witness rather to portions of holy and spiritual life large and frequent, interrupted only by occasional falls. May we grow in grace, and in the faith and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be His, not only at some few moments of our lives, but habitually and for ever

LECTURE XXVIII.

ST. THOMAS—FAITH TRIUMPHANT IN DOUBT.

St. John xx. 27.

Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

Hebrews iv. 3.

We who have believed do enter into rest.

Two sorts of language are held respecting faith and belief, each combining in itself, as often happens, a curious mixture of truth and error. The one insists that belief is a thing wholly independent of our will, depending simply on the greater or less force of the evidences set before our minds: and that therefore, as faith can be no virtue, so unbelief can be no sin. The other pronounces that all unbelief arises out of an evil heart, and a dislike to the truths taught; nay, that if any man even disbelieves any proposition not probably religious in itself, but generally taught along with such as are religious, he cannot be considering the truth or falsehood of the particular question, simply as it is in itself true or false, but must disbelieve, because he has a dislike to other truths which are really religious. Now, to those who hold their belief to be one of the most precious things of their whole being, it is by no means a light matter to know the truth concerning it;

whether it is indeed a thing about which we are not at all responsible, or whether it has nothing to do with our mind's perception of truth, but depends wholly on certain moral feelings, or rather on an arbitrary assumed connection between such feelings and our judgment upon all points taught as a part of religious knowledge, whether in themselves religious or no.

The two passages which I have chosen together for my text, will illustrate the question before us. The belief by which we enter into God's rest is clearly something moral. The unbelief of the apostle Thomas, which could not at once embrace the fact of our Lord's resurrection, assuredly arose from no wish or feeling in his mind against it. There is a belief, then, which is moral, and the want of which is a sin; there is an unbelief which does not arise out of an evil heart, and which is not a sin: but it may be a great misfortune, and a very heavy trial, the heaviest, indeed, with which God can visit us.

The unbelief which is a sin, to speak generally, is an unbelief of God's commandments, or of any thing which He has told us, because we wish it not to be true. The unbelief which may be no sin, is a disbelief of God's promises, because we think them too good to be true; in other words, the believing not for joy. Or again, the disbelief of such points about which our wishes are purely indifferent; we neither desire to believe, nor have any reluctance to do so, but simply the evidence is not sufficient to convince us. I do not say that such unbelief as this is never a sin, but that it need not be so always; and that when it is a sin, and when not, is a point for God to judge rather than man; remembering only that as God will judge it, and may declare that it is sin, we are bound, each one for himself, to examine his own heart and mind carefully respecting it.

But whether of one kind or another, there must be clearly a great amount of unbelief in the world, because we by no means see generally existing, that victory over sin and the world which the Scriptures speak of as the fruit of faith. There is, for instance, as we cannot doubt, a great deal of unbelief amongst us here. And of which sort do we think it is? Is it the unbelief of the apostle Thomas, or is it that evil heart of unbelief spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which therefore must fall short of obtaining the rest of God?

Now is our unbelief the unbelief of the Apostle Thomas? Let us consider what his unbelief was. He had continued with our Lord faithfully up to the very time when He was betrayed. He had loved our Lord very earnestly; for when Christ went up from beyond Jordan to Judea, to raise Lazarus from the dead, and the disciples thought that His going was most dangerous both to Him and to them, Thomas said to his fellow disciples, when he found that Christ was resolved to go, "Let us also go that we may die with Him." Neither after our Lord's death was he at all inclined to desert the other apostles, or to shrink from the danger of being one of their society. His absence, when Christ first appeared to the other ten, was evidently accidental. He appears afterwards, no less than before, to have been one of their company. He had loved Christ then, had followed Him in all His temptations, was still clinging to the society of His disciples. The thing most welcome to his heart in the whole world would have been to know that Christ was risen, and that his faith and love were sure of their blessing. Yet it is just this very thing, so desirable, so pure and entire a happiness, which he cannot venture to believe. It is too good to be true. I cannot so trust my wishes as to follow them without assurance. "Except I see in His hands the print of the nails,

and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Will not, because I dare not; because to admit my most cherished hope too lightly, is only to expose myself to bitter disappointment.

Nor is the Apostle Thomas the only one of the sons of men who has felt such disbelief. Others there have been since, and many whose love in like manner has been fixed on Christ; to whose minds nothing seemed so divinely wise as His words, to whose hearts nothing seemed so excellent as His life and commandments. Yet, being experienced men, and knowing how much of error has ever been received among men, they dare not, where their hopes are so interested, abandon themselves lightly to believe in their fulfilment. When it is a matter of obedience to do what Christ commands or not, they have no hesitation. Their language then is, "Though He kill me, yet will I trust in Him." But speak of the certainty of heavenly things, of Christ's undoubted triumph over death and hell, of a light dawning clearly through the darkness of the grave, and their heart then sinks within them. Then they would give all in the world, if it might be that the heaven could be for one moment opened, and that they might see the Son of Man at the right hand of God. But the cloud is suffered sometimes to remain upon them; even till death comes their faith receives not its full assurance. Shall we say that these men are unbelievers, and that their unbelief comes out of an evil heart, such as cannot enter into God's rest? It were a cruel and unjust sentence to say so. The happy believer, who never doubts of the truth of God's promises, little knows what is the trial of their faith who believe, if I may so speak, without belief, who believe purely because they love, and cling to that which they feel to be good, even when their understanding cannot assure

them that it is true. And as Christ did in His mercy give His Apostle Thomas the satisfaction which he craved, so there will be no happier souls in heaven on the morning of the resurrection than those who wake at last to find their fears false, and their fondest hopes realized; who see that God is over all, and that Christ has risen indeed.

But is this unbelief ours? No, I believe, most rarely. Our unbelief, and we have but too much of it, is an unbelief of any thing rather than of the truth of Christ's promises; our difficulty lies anywhere else but there. Our unbelief relates to Christ's warnings, to His solemn declarations of the necessity of devoting ourselves wholly to His service; to His assurances that there will be a judgment to try the very hearts and reins, and a punishment for those who are condemned in that judgment beyond all that our worst fears can reach to. And we disbelieve this, not because it is too good to be true, but because its truth would be intolerable; because if we did believe it to be true, our whole lives and hearts must be altered. Or, again, is it a disbelief of great pain, like that of theirs whom I was just now describing; who would give all that they have in the world to be able to believe as heartily as they love, but who find that they cannot? Our disbelief costs us no pain at all, nor scarcely gives us any consciousness. We do not bring Christ's words steadily before our minds, and then find ourselves unable to receive them. Not at all. We do not dispute them. If we did do this in earnest, we might find out that they were true. But we take a surer course, we shut them out from our minds altogether, not by any means denying them, but only not believing them.

Where in the whole world is this particular sort of unbelief more frequent than here? Do you deny Christ? If any one were to say to you that the Apostles' Creed were a mass of falsehood from beginning to end, should you be

ready to listen to him? Or should you not be in the highest degree shocked and disgusted? If any one were to tell you that heaven was all a fable, and that when you died there would be an end of you for ever, I believe that the most careless among you would cry out blasphemy. You are not misbelievers, but too many of us surely are not believers. There is no greater mistake in the world than to suppose that we believe what we do not disbelieve. The common state with many of us is to do neither the one nor the other; neither to think that Christ's word is true, nor yet that it is false; but to think nothing at all about it.

But this is truly unbelief; truly, and in the scriptural sense of unbelief; because, although neither our tongue nor our understanding consciously says that Christ's word is false, yet our whole being says so daily; it gives its witness against Christ's truth, silently, indeed, but quite decisively. Our whole being has settled the question for itself without directly arguing it. Our hopes renounce Christ, our fears renounce Him, our affections renounce Him; they all go on their way, working busily every day, but taking no account at all of Him. And their testimony is *our* testimony, for they are our true life. Ask of our fear whether it ever knows any thing of Christ, and it will say, No. Ask of our hope the same, and it will give the same answer. Ask of our affections, which are very busy every day, and their answer is no less positive, that to them Christ is not. Their witness is our truest witness of all; their clinging to or indifference to any thing, is our real belief or unbelief. We believe not Christ's resurrection any more than His Apostle Thomas believed it. Say rather, far less; for his hopes and affections did believe in it, it was his understanding alone that was unsatisfied. But our hopes and affections do not believe in it, and our understanding rather does not deny it than with confidence affirms it.

To such, therefore, that most precious passage of the Scripture, which contains our Lord's appearance to Thomas, and his joyful confession when his understanding was enabled to go along with his wishes, can be as yet of no interest at all. Neither their belief nor their unbelief is the same with the apostle's. They are of a far different kind; far more resembling that evil heart of unbelief spoken of in the Hebrews,—which departs from the living God, which is confirmed, not by any difficulties of the understanding, but only through the deceitfulness of sin.

But it is not to such that Christ reveals Himself. The gracious words, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands," &c., will never be spoken to them. By a far different process must Christ be sought: not by the understanding, but by the heart. By obeying Christ's commandments you will be best assured of Christ's glory. By thinking of Him at all, you will best learn to think of Him with assurance. And here we see how our help does not and cannot stand in the help of man. If the matter were to satisfy the understanding, we might produce again our Lord's appearance and words to Thomas, and the unwilling doubt might again be changed into joyful certainty, and cry out, "My Lord and my God!" But how can man, by telling us to hope, make us hope; or by telling us that we ought to love, make us love really? Alas! it is impossible. Things are mightier than words. The world around you, so busy and so real to you, utterly excludes all mere human teaching. One thing only we could hope to do, not to persuade you to hope and to love, for that were vain; but to persuade you to pray to Him in whose gift hope and love and faith are. If our words could reach thus far, they would do all that could be desired of them. We can but pray you to pray to God; to ask His help for the very weaknesses which most beset you; to ask Him in Christ's

name, and through the virtue of Christ's blood, to give you the faith which you need; a faith not of words but of feeling; not contented with merely not denying, but with its whole heart and soul affirming. This is the faith which overcometh the world; this is the faith which enters into God's rest.

LECTURE XXIX.

THE PATRIARCHS—FAITH TRIUMPHANT IN DEATH.

HEBREWS xi. 13.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

THE part of this verse on which I would wish more especially to dwell, is that in which it says, "These all *died* in faith." For many are well content to *live* in faith many years, looking forward I mean to some good thing which is not yet manifest, and doing much and enduring much in order to gain it. And this no doubt is a faith after its measure; it does elevate the character far more than it would be elevated without it: he whose object is removed from him by ten years, or by one year, or even by a few months and weeks, and who works on steadily towards it, is far above him who can only work for a thing actually before him, or in immediate prospect,

to be enjoyed to-morrow if not to-day. But the difference is immense between the faith which looks to the most remote earthly prospect, and that which looks for its reward after death. And therefore I said that I wished particularly to direct your attention to that part of the text which says that the Patriarchs all died in faith; not having, even up to their latest hour, received the promises which they hoped for.

Now the excellence of this faith, which places its object beyond death, may be seen in two respects. First, as it is in itself greater and bolder, existing in spite of greater difficulties. It is this, because it is fixed upon an unknown object; our objects in this life, however remote, are such as we know or can well conceive of; there are no kinds of human pleasure, of such pleasure at least as we ourselves are ever likely to desire, which are not in some degree familiar to our minds already. And not only are they in themselves familiar, but there is nothing of exceeding strangeness for the most part interposed between us and them; nothing but difficulties or hardships of which we have a tolerable notion beforehand. Whereas the faith which looks beyond the grave, has for its object that which no man can adequately conceive of; and between it and its object there lies the most wonderful and awful change in the world, the change of death. And therefore the faith which is not staggered either by the incomprehensible nature of its object, or by that startling change which must be undergone before the object can be reached, is at once entitled to the praise of great strength and boldness; it holds on its way with a determined bearing, such as in itself we cannot but admire. But farther, the faith which stops short of death may be, and often is, a faith which looks to a good object; to the accomplishment of some great work, or to the enjoyment of honorable

rest, an old age relieved from labour, respected and beloved. Good objects, I would not say otherwise; yet surely not the best nor the highest. But the faith which looks beyond death is content with no less object than God Himself. It may be said that nothing hinders our faith from looking forward to a revival of earthly happiness, to an union with those friends whom we have most loved here. But I believe that practically, whatever we might think possible beforehand, the faith which is strong enough to look beyond the grave does not fix its view chiefly upon any known pleasure to be again revived, upon any known love to be eternally continued; but upon One who is truly the great end of all being, upon the knowledge of and communion with God and Christ. I do not say for a moment that faith does not and may not also look forward to the realizing and perfecting of its earthly affections; were it not so, the communion of saints would be but an empty name; I only mean, that the faith which ventures to dwell habitually beyond the grave will support itself by no meaner object than God Himself: unless sustained by Him, and fixed on Him, it soon drops from a height which then becomes unnatural, it contracts its hopes within the circle of earth and earth's known blessings.

Now this faith which takes death within its prospect, and looks on boldly to something beyond, is at once the greatest elevation and the greatest blessing of humanity. But it cannot be denied that in quiet times, and amid much worldly enjoyment, such faith is hard to be maintained, and in many wholly wanting. And they go on for a long time without missing it, doing their common duties and enjoying or hoping for their common pleasures; habitually their view is bounded by this life, even if it reaches far beyond the very present moment. There is no saying for how many years, outward circumstances favouring, we may continue

to do without the highest faith. The thought of death need not come near to us, near to us I mean in any sense that will affect us personally; we and those dearest to us may live for many years, and live without so much as falling into any great danger of death. But yet all the while we are in extreme insecurity, and the sense of this sooner or later must be forced upon us; for sooner or later death and its strangeness must come near to us, and something beyond the grave must be thought of, because the grave itself is close at hand. And if faith has not habitually lived in that region, no longer far off but near, fear will now be dwelling upon it continually.

Is it then a wrong feeling which desires such peace as the Church now enjoys; which is thankful for its deliverance from persecution, for the cessation of those times when martyrdom was a real thing to which every Christian might without any remarkable accident be exposed; and when consequently men were obliged to consider what death was, and what was their trust beyond it? No, it is not wrong to be thankful that our lot is fallen upon calmer times; but it is our great shame and our great misery if these calmer times are more than we can bear, if what is in itself a blessing becomes to us a curse. But without desiring times of persecution, which had their own trials too, trials of the spirit as well as of the flesh, we may yet desire some such helps as may give us that faith which times of persecution did certainly exercise. We may earnestly desire such helps as may bring the thoughts of death, and the state beyond death more frequently and naturally to our minds, yet in a gentler form than when brought to the mind by the frequent sight and danger of imprisonment, of torture, and of martyrdom. And that such helps might be ministered by and through the Church in various ways, with a far mightier power than at present,

I feel thoroughly assured. But these private persons cannot procure for themselves, so it is needless for us now to dwell on them. What we can do for ourselves with God's help is much more our concern; how we, as many of us as have it not, may attain to their faith of whom the text speaks; how we may live here in our common peaceful life, without any near prospect of death, or of suffering of any kind, and yet live in faith, and what is more, die in faith; believing in and desiring a happiness which we must die before we can enjoy.

Now if any one has ever had occasion to observe the difficulties which hinder ignorant persons from consenting to emigrate to a foreign country, even when they are in great distress here, he will be able to see a lively image of our own case, and of the difficulty which keeps us from being partakers of the patriarchs' faith. Ignorant people are unwilling to emigrate because they know nothing of the country to which they are urged to go, nor of the nature of the journey to it. The sea with all its wonders is, in the first place, a great terror to them; but suppose the voyage over, still their minds can find nothing to rest upon. The face of the country, the climate, the society, the way of living, the work which they may be called upon to do, all are strange and incomprehensible; and whatever their distress may be at home, still they would rather endure it than wrench themselves from all that they know to venture upon a new world, in which there is not a single object, animate or inanimate, from which they can expect a friendly welcome. I never can blame the shrinking from emigration under such circumstances; yet we know that where there is more knowledge, where we feel to understand what we are going to, distant and new countries are not so appalling; there are many who go to them every day with more of hope and pleasure than of fear and

regret. Something of this is applicable to our own case commonly. We too shrink from dwelling on a state altogether beyond our conceptions, from a voyage infinitely mysterious in itself, and leading to a land in which we feel that we should be utter strangers. Above all, we shrink from a country where we should not find a single friend. And this is precisely the feeling which interferes with our faith. We will not, till we must, force our minds from all that is familiar to them and dear, to a prospect so dark and appalling. Nor is it possible that we should do otherwise. But must we necessarily continue to find the prospect so dark and cheerless? No books and no words can indeed give a poor man an exact idea of the state of a new country; much there will be which he cannot realize till he sees it; but enough may be told him to remove the extreme vagueness of his original notions; instructions may be given him, letters or recommendations sent out for him, which may satisfy him, to a certain degree, as to the place to which he is going, and may assure him that when he arrives there, he will find some to receive him kindly. And is not this so with us all? Is it not possible, without gaining distinct notions of what eye hath not seen nor ear heard, yet to lose our feeling of the utter strangeness of the unseen world; and above all, to dispel altogether the apprehension that we should find in it no friends? This is the great point of all, and this may and should be done by us all. We cannot picture to ourselves the face of the country whither we are going, but we may gain the knowledge, and assure ourselves of the love of its King; and knowing that we are loved by Him, then we know that all His subjects will receive us kindly too; and some of these we have known; they once lived with us here, but they have gone to the distant land before us.

In short, dropping the figure, it is, I believe, an un-

doubted truth, that in proportion as any one draws near to God, and thinks of Him, and prays to Him constantly and earnestly, so does he become familiar with the life beyond the grave, and find it possible and natural to fix his faith there. For with God continually in our thoughts, — God in Christ I mean, for a Christian knows God no otherwise than as approached through His Son, — with God constantly thought of, prayed to, praised, thanked, and served, it is impossible that death should any longer be so great a barrier, or the state beyond it so dark and cheerless. For to God there is no difference of time or state; He is after our death as before it, before it as after it, in all respects the same. And death, which to Him is absolutely nothing, becomes to us also less and less in proportion as we are more entirely His. So it is said that Enoch walked with God, and then it is added, "and he was not, for God took him." He walked with God on earth, and he walked with God in heaven, and the two became blended into one, and the barrier between them melted away into nothing. This is a true type, showing that the sense of death is destroyed by our consciousness of God. He who walks with God faithfully here, all that is said of him will be, "he was not, for God took him;" he will be missed here by us, but to himself it is in a manner all but one life, the latter part the more perfect and the happier, yet both were passed with God.

Again, all that has been said tends to that same conclusion on which I have dwelt so often; the one conclusion, "Let us pray." Let us pray: if we have prayed hitherto, let us pray the more; if we have not, then let us begin to pray. Remember that we may pray not merely as God's creatures, but as His children. This is our Christian privilege; this Christ's death has purchased for us. We may pray to God as His children. Where then is

fear? Where is doubt? Where ought to be coldness? More certainly than our fathers and our mothers love us, does God the Most High love us, even us,—so humble, so sinful. And this is the most simple truth in the world, although it sounds like the loftiest flight of fancy; it is really and actually true. Wherefore, let us pray to God in Christ continually: and so shall we learn, like the patriarchs, to live in faith and to die in faith.

LECTURE XXX.

THE PEACE OF GOD.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 7.

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

WE cannot doubt that what is here called the peace of God is no other than that peace which our Lord promised to His disciples, when He said to them, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." And without fully understanding what it is, we yet cannot doubt that it is a blessing of the highest kind, when we read the language in which it is spoken of. Our Lord promises it as an especial gift from Himself to His people; St. Paul says of it that "it passes all understanding." Nor yet is there any reason to think that it is a blessing which belongs only to persons of one particular age. There is nothing in the words either of

Christ or His disciples so to limit it. It would seem to have no other limit than this, that in order to enjoy peace, the mind must be capable of feeling the opposite to peace, that is, disquiet and annoyance. The heart so young as to be free from all care or pain, or so old as to have every feeling dulled and almost extinguished, may perhaps be incapable of receiving the promise, but all who are past the merest childhood and are not yet arrived at dotage, as they are capable of feeling grief, disappointment, pain, and anxiety, so are they capable also of receiving the peace of God.

We then here are all capable of receiving it; that is, it is a blessing neither out of our reach nor unsuitable to us because of our age. Other hindrances there may be in the way of our receiving it, great hindrances in our own will; but not in our age. Or if in our age, it is a hindrance which acts upon us in this way, that we do not trouble ourselves to seek any peace at all, because we are so little conscious of uneasiness. Yet at a later age there may be hindrances of another sort; we shall seek for peace perhaps with more earnestness than we did in early life, but our tendency will be greater also to mistake a false peace for the true. And it is because of this tendency of later years, and of the certainty that we shall feel the craving after peace sooner or later, that it is so important to be possessed early with the true peace of God, and so be saved from all temptation of running after a counterfeit.

I have often alluded to the hardness of impressing persons in your present condition, because the world seems so sufficient to you, and you seem so sufficient to yourselves. And even when instances are brought very near to you, that the world's sufficiency and your own are not

to be relied on, still the lesson, if it speaks loudly for a time, is soon repelled by the habits of your common life, which seem to assure you that you have no need of alarming yourselves, or of seeking for any thing more than you have already. And at this moment perhaps least of all, when your minds are set upon a prospect of very keen earthly pleasure, would you be disposed to seek or to desire very earnestly to become sharers in the peace of God.

Yet even at this moment the still small voice may speak and some in all likelihood will hear it. For those who do not or will not, it will but testify against them, like the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast; and its witness regarded with indifference will be recorded against them as an opportunity lost.

Some undoubtedly will hear it, for they have heard it already. I am fully persuaded that to many the peace of God is not a thing altogether unknown, though it may not yet have been enjoyed in such measure as to deserve in their experience the high title given it by the Apostle, that it passes all understanding. But they know it to be a blessing which they desire and which they would fain taste more often and more perfectly. And if they were asked in what this peace consisted so far as they had known it, would they not answer something to this effect? That it had consisted, first in the entire absence of all angry and hostile feelings towards any, and in the sensible presence of feelings of general kindness and benevolence. This is a state which sometimes possesses us consciously, and if it is not actually the peace of God, yet at the very lowest it is a state of preparation for it. For if it be true that he who hateth his brother is a murderer, and no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him; and again, that he

who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him; then the heart, which is entirely free from any angry or unkind feelings towards any one, and feels within the very opposite, that is, a spirit of general kindness and a wish to see and make others happy, may be said truly to be at least in a state not far from receiving the peace of God.

And here I think youth has often an advantage over maturer age. Commonly speaking, in youth our dislikes are very much personal; our angry feelings are stirred by something done or supposed to be done directly against ourselves. Now in our better and calmer tempers these are things which we can get over. It is not after all so very difficult when a little time has gone over, to forgive a personal affront or injury, unless the circumstances have in them something very peculiar, or our own temper and disposition be unusually bad. Far greater is the temptation in after life, when personal feelings are very often mixed up with questions of principle, and those who annoy us or injure us are also those whose opinion we entirely condemn, whose lives are marked with vices which we do well to hold in abhorrence. Then indeed it does become hard to judge ourselves strictly, to separate our just dislike of falsehood, whether in opinion or in practice, from some personal soreness, for things personally displeasing; the flow of our charity becomes obstructed, and our evil passions, ever seeking for some pretence to justify themselves, keep whispering in our ears that we are not uncharitable, but only zealous; not hating our own enemy, but only shrinking from the enemy of God. This is a conflict and a trial from which the young are generally free. And in this respect their minds are often more prepared than those of older persons to receive in simplicity the blessing of God's peace.

But now taking any person's mind in this state, a state free from enmity and unkindness, full of positive kindness, is it not a step at least to the higher peace of God? Surely it is, if there be any meaning in the prayer which says, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." I mean, that we can comprehend and believe something of God's infinite love to us, if our own hearts be cleansed from positive want of love to our brethren. We can believe that the peace which we feel towards all human beings God Himself is willing to take a share in, that He desires us to be at peace with Him also. The fulness of His grace, the infinity of His love, which gave His only-begotten Son to die for us, having been manifested,—is not one great hindrance at any rate taken out of our minds which might stop us from believing this, the hindrance of unkindness in our own hearts? If we, with all our imperfections and sinfulness, yet know what it is to be at peace with all our brethren, can we not believe that the most gracious God would desire us to be at peace with Him much more, and wishes to remove every root of bitterness which separates us from His love?

And this sense of God's disposition towards us, this love of God in Christ being believed as a real thing, does undoubtedly strike into the heart with a very softening power; its tendency is, according to the witness which the Scripture bears of it, to make us feel the full peace of God. I am persuaded that a sense of God's love to us in Christ Jesus has absolutely no tendency to make us careless; on the contrary, it does truly tend to establish the law. A belief in God's indifference to sin, in what is sometimes called His mercy, that is, His not caring for our evil deeds, because He makes such large allowance for the weakness of our nature, this of course would have a tendency to make us careless. But how totally different is a belief in God's

mercy generally to all who do evil, and a belief in His love for us individually! No man was ever tempted to neglect or displease another by his belief in that other person loving him. What we experience in our human relations shows this quite certainly. Take the relation which subsists here between us, and is it not certain that in proportion as any one under instruction believes that his instructor has a real disinterested personal interest in his welfare, he is the more disposed to comply with all his directions? The mere absence of strictness is a totally different thing from real personal interest or kindness; absence of strictness may be either indifference or indolence, it may proceed entirely from a selfish feeling, and therefore deserves no return of gratitude. And in this way mere easiness or lenity constantly excites in the minds of those to whom it is exercised, not gratitude but contempt. But totally different is this from the belief that we ourselves are loved; for that cannot but excite a feeling in return; it is not in human nature not to be moved by it, and in proportion to our belief in its reality must be our desire to return it.

And therefore the Apostle has well said, "We love God because He first loved us." And it is quite certain that what we ordinarily want is a belief of God's love to us; we do not realize to ourselves all that Christ's death shows us of God's love; we do not believe that our own single individual soul is and ever has been the direct object of the infinite love of the most high God. Yet this we are warranted, nay, we are commanded to believe. I know that it is hard to believe it, hard because of our own littleness in part, hard also because of our own hardness. And no doubt the great enemy of our salvation uses all his arts to hinder us from being impressed fully with this truth, for if it once takes possession of our hearts, then are we redeemed indeed. Yet I would wish to put it be-

fore you — before us, I would say rather, for it is the one truth which we all need to believe. The evil one puts into our minds something which may seem at first sight like it, but which is indeed infinitely different. He whispers, "God will not punish, we shall therefore not surely die." How different from the Christian truth: "God loves us, therefore why will we die?" How different in its fruits, and how different also in itself, because the one says that God is careless or powerless, the other says that He is loving.

This belief, this faith in God's love shown or proved to us by Christ's death, is the only way by which we can enjoy that peace of God which passeth all understanding. For it tells us that God is at peace with us already, we have only to be at peace with Him. It tells us that we may rely confidently on His help to overcome all our temptations, because He loves us. It tells us that it is His desire that we should be victorious, and have all things that we need in order to win the victory, because He loves us. It tells us that it is His desire that we should be with Him for ever, because He loves us. And does it not tell us also, that we may go on our way rejoicing, and full of strength and earnestness to put down all our spiritual enemies under our feet, because He loves us.

And now for those among us who having believed this already have been encouraged by it, as is natural, and have overcome many of their sins, and are struggling with the rest, and have walked with God with something of the feeling of a child towards his father, cannot you now believe in God's love yet more, and do you not feel how the consciousness of it is indeed a peace which passeth all understanding? Do not you perceive how this faith hallows every worldly blessing of which you are tasting so many, because it teaches you to regard each as the gift of

God? And as for those who have not yet believed it, and whose hearts are so full of sin that they are in no disposition to believe it, yet it is no less true even of them at this moment that God loves them. Infinite indeed is that love of the Most Holy which regards us not only after we are turned to Him, but while we are yet in our sins, with no thought looking heavenward. God loves even such, and has given His only-begotten Son to save them. Believe it while it is yet true, for if you will not believe it, it will not be true for ever. And that will be a thought of intolerable misery, when God's face being utterly turned away from us for evermore, we shall say to ourselves, "Now He has fulfilled what we believe, we thought that He cared not for us, and behold it is now true; but yet a little while past and He loved us even as He loved those whom He will love for ever, and had we believed His word when He told us so, He would have loved us still, and we should have been His children, and He would have been our Father for evermore."

LECTURE XXXI.

CHRIST'S WARNING TO THE YOUNG.

St. Mark x. 21, 22.

Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

You will wonder perhaps why I should have chosen these words as the text on which to address you to-day. Or remembering that this is the first Sunday in Lent, and that I have sometimes at this season reminded you of the duty of giving to the poor, and that there is a box at this time put up in the chapel to receive the alms of such as are disposed to give, you may think that I took this text to urge you to alms-giving, and not to resemble the young man in the Gospel, who when called upon by our Lord to give, could not make up his mind to part with what he loved so dearly. But indeed I had no such meaning; I chose the text for another purpose than this. Your alms-giving is a source of great pleasure to me, but I was not particularly thinking of that to-day. Seeing you here once again assembled, to remain here together in the natural course of things for a period of four months, it seems to me that something deeper and more general must suggest itself concerning you than the wish to see you

practise any one particular duty. For as St. Paul has truly supposed that a man might give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet be nothing, much more is it possible that one might give, and even give liberally, out of his superfluities, and yet be nothing. And then what are we profited by such giving? Much rather, seeing you all, so many living souls, for whom we must give account, and who must also give account for yourselves; the one thought that rises in the mind is the earnest desire that you be not nothing but something; that you should give your account with joy and not with grief; that you should be not enemies of God, nor murmuring slaves, but His true and loving children, forgiven and accepted in Jesus Christ.

Then the application of the text to us this day becomes clear and striking, taking it not in its letter but in its spirit. There came a young man to Christ, to ask Him what he should do to inherit eternal life; and Christ named to Him some of the ten commandments, to which the young man replied, "All these have I observed from my youth." Then says the evangelist, "Jesus beholding him loved him." This is, as it were, the first part of the story, and surely this case is very like our own. Are not we here come avowedly to learn of Christ, to be brought up in Christian truths and principles for this life and for life eternal? And if Christ were to ask us of our knowledge and of our practice, surely a large proportion of us would be able to answer that they knew the main truths of the Gospel and the main distinctions between good and evil; and many of us might go farther, and say, not indeed that all their common and most obvious duties they had followed from their youth up, but at least that they had followed many of them, and desired still to follow them; that from much evil they had been accustomed to shrink, and purposed and hoped to shrink from it still. And so great is

the tenderness of our Lord Jesus Christ to all His people, and especially to the young, that when He sees any of you so living as I have described, living, that is, respectably and amiably, guilty of no gross sins, and doing many duties, loved by your friends, and affectionate to them in return; it is not too much to say that Christ loves you; that His eye is upon you with a loving anxiety; that He regards you with nothing of severity nor of threatening, but with an earnest desire that you may become wholly His, and be loved by Him for ever.

So it is then, so we may venture to apply it, that we stand before Christ to-day. Jesus beholding us loves us. His voice to us is nothing harsh, but full of gracious encouragement; all that there is of good in us He acknowledges and regards with approbation and love. But let us hear His words, for He speaks to the young man who had just declared that he had constantly kept His commandments, and whom as He beheld Him He loved: "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." What is this when addressed to us; will He, does He find, that there is one thing which we lack also, and which He bids us without delay to gain? Or might He say to us that we are all clean, all His true servants going on from good to better, and lacking nothing at all but that ripeness which added years will not fail to give us? If our consciences will not suffer us to believe this, then it must be that Christ is saying to us, "One thing thou lackest;" there may be many things which we lack, but there must at least be one.

Now the one thing which He sees wanting in so many of us, is expressed clearly in the latter part of His words to the young man in the Gospel. He tells us, "Come, take

up the cross, and follow me." The words are figurative we see when He says, "Take up the cross," and we may ask what the figure means. But we know that in the Latin language, the term *crux*, or *cross*, had been long used to express generally any great pain or evil; and the words *crucio* and *cruciatus* derived from it are yet used only generally; they do not express literally the pain or suffering of crucifixion, but pain and torment simply. And this manner of speaking had come into use, because the Romans used the punishment of crucifixion commonly, not only towards slaves, but towards criminals generally of their subject nations, unless they were persons of high condition. So that when our Lord tells the young man to take up his cross, it meant exactly, "Bear thy pain or thy suffering, whatever it may be, and follow me." And so He had said in another place, "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me;" meaning the very same thing; he who does not submit willingly to his pain or suffering, and continue to follow after me notwithstanding the pain, he is not worthy of me. In both places we see that the taking up the cross is joined with the following after Him; in both places the cross means the same thing—*cruciatum* rather than *crucem*, pain, suffering, burden, evil hard to bear, let the particular kind be what it may.

Now to take one of those seeming contradictions in the Scriptures, of which I have spoken so often, as containing some of the Scripture's most useful lessons, let us put side by side our Lord's words, "Take up thy cross and follow me," and His other words, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." In one place He seems to call His followers to the most painful service, in the other to tell them that their pain will be nothing at all. What is now called our cross, that strong term signifying the extremity of pain and

suffering, is again called an easy yoke, and a light burden. Take them out of their right order, and they are falsehood and death; take them in their right order and according to Christ's mind, and they are truth and life.

He calls us to take up our cross and follow Him. We were following Him, not taking up our cross; we were following Him where to follow Him was easy, and it is many times very easy. We loved those who loved us; we were glad to please them; it is good and right so to do, but surely not very hard or painful. We abstained from low vices, vices disgusting and discreditable; good and right also, but surely involving no severe sacrifice. We were good-natured and good-humoured when we were pleased and happy, a right temper and an amiable one, but still there is no bearing our cross in this. He beholds us, and loves us, but He calls us to something of a more real service. He says, "You have followed me where it was easy, and you have done well, but now prepare for something far more trying, —I call you to follow me where it is hard. Be quite sure that there is in you somewhere or other, a temper or an inclination which does not suit my law. Follow me in this point, and you will know what it is to take up your cross; follow me always, and this point, and many such points, will be found in you." It is easy to be temperate in meat and drink when you are neither hungry nor thirsty. It is easy to speak truth when the truth is convenient and creditable. It is easy to work when the work to be done is pleasant, and when you are strong; but to be temperate always, to speak truth always, to do our appointed work always, this is not easy, this is to bear our cross. And here, in how many points is your cross very near to you, the pleasant fault to be shunned, the painful duty to be done, the scornful smile to be endured and unheeded, the unkindness to be borne without irritation or desire to re-

turn evil for evil, the regulation to be kept when it may be broken without detection, and apparently with no worse fault than the simple breaking it: all these things, and such as these, which run through your lives daily, which you well know from past experience, which are coming or come to you again this half-year, as they came the last; these are the things with regard to which Christ tells you, "One thing thou lackest; come, take up thy cross and follow me." Now may I venture to alter the words of what next follows in the Gospel, while I faithfully keep its spirit: "They were sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for they were young and at school." Even so it is, and even such is sometimes the very actual language which may be heard; this is too hard for us; it is not possible to be fully such as we should be at school; there are things, not right we know, but which we cannot help doing; there are things, right we know, but which we cannot here set ourselves to practise; the principles and practice around us must in some degree be ours; we have followed Christ in many things from our youth up, and hope still to follow Him, but this hard saying, to follow Him where it is very painful, to shun the fault which all practise, to do the duty which all neglect, this we cannot do. And even so it is continually; they go away grieved, for they are young, and they are at school.

"Then Jesus looked round about and said, How hardly shall they that are young enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a young man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible." This is the very real scripture of the passage as applied to you. What

hindered the young man in the story from taking up his cross was his riches; what hinders you, so at least we hear it sometimes said, is your being young and being at school. This is the excuse urged, the extreme difficulty of making the sacrifice required in your actual circumstances, just as the young man found it so difficult in his actual circumstances to sell all that he had. His cross was surely not lighter than ours, but much heavier, but he could not take it up, and he went away grieved, much grieved that he could not be good easily; that the two things which he loved, his duty and his comfort, and which had long been united, were now divided; both he could have no longer, yet it grieved him to part with either. He went away grieving; and surely with a far deeper grief did our merciful Lord look after him as he went away, and see him whom He had loved, him whom He had hoped to love always, now turning to destruction. But did He call after him and say, "Turn back, thou young man, for I love thee still, and if thou wilt not follow me taking up thy cross, follow me without it, when thou wilt and where thou wilt, and no farther." Alas! nothing of the kind. His own way led to Calvary, thither His Father's will called Him. He was to bear the cross for us all, not figuratively, but literally. Thither He must go, and thither must those follow Him who would be with Him for ever. Wherefore He looked round about on those who still remained with Him, and said, "How hardly shall they that have riches" —"they that are young and at school," He says to those to whom that is their difficulty, — "how hardly shall they enter into the kingdom of God!" His disciples were astonished at His words, and they are often astonished still; nay, they say, "Youth surely is an excuse, the young cannot serve Him fully." But He says again, "And therefore it is easier, if this be so, for a camel to go through

a needle's eye, than for a young man to enter into the kingdom of God." Then say we in astonishment beyond measure, "Who then can be saved?" But He answers, "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible." Yes, if that rich man had not turned away from Christ, but had run up closer to Him, and had thrown himself at His feet, crying out and saying with tears, "Lord, I will follow thee; help me to follow thee whithersoever thou goest," then surely his gracious Saviour would have beheld him and loved him far more than at first, and would have given him the strength which he needed, and that which was so hard would have been done, and the rich man would have entered into the kingdom of God. The application lies at the door. You have heard Christ's call, to take up your cross and follow Him, to serve Him always in all things, in small and great, in thought, word, and deed, there most carefully where it costs you most pain to do it. But do not go away grieving, because you are young, and because you are at a place where temptations are many, and faithful steady service of Christ will cost you many a sacrifice. Turn not from Him, but to Him much rather, with earnest prayer that He who bore His most painful cross for you, will enable you to bear your light one for His love; that He will help you daily, as your trial will come daily; that His strength may be made perfect in your weakness. And then, though the thing be harder than that a camel should pass through a needle's eye, yet shall it be done. The young and they that are at school, with all their carelessness, with all their difficulties from without as well as from within, they shall enter into the kingdom of God, for so some have entered, and so shall some enter again, and so may all enter who do not turn away from their cross, but ask Christ's grace to help them to bear it.

LECTURE XXXII.

THE MEANING OF JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS.

GALATIANS iii. 1.

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

IF, on the one hand, it be a rule of common sense that we should not speak a language which our hearers do not understand, yet it is a rule of common sense no less, that, in speaking to a mixed body of hearers, we should not omit what is useful to those who can and will understand, because of those who cannot, chiefly because they will not. Nay, farther, if the want of understanding be no fault, yet unless it is accompanied with an earnest wish to understand, and is therefore as it were calling out for help, it is entitled to less consideration than the state of those who, having learned something, are able and willing to learn something more. I do not think it wrong, therefore, sometimes to choose a subject for my sermon which I know that the very careless and the very ignorant will learn nothing from, if it be of a sort such as to be useful to those who are not careless and ignorant. To try to preach always for the lowest portion of our congregation, is a practice commended neither by reason nor by the highest example; it is a practice from which our more advanced hearers would lose far more certainly than our most ignorant ones would gain.

And when the Scriptures, ordered by authority to be read in the church, are themselve hard to be understood, are we to leave them altogether untouched, so that they will perhaps edify no one, or shall we not try so to explain them, as that many of our hearers may find in them a living word of truth, though to some they may still say nothing. The Epistle to the Galatians is ordered to be read over in the service of the church three times a-year. Shall we always allow it to be read unexplained, because it is possible, or, if you will, even certain, that our attempts to explain it will be to many uninteresting, and therefore for the most part unintelligible? I do not think that we ought at any time so to neglect it.

But if not generally, much less should we neglect it now, when the truths which it teaches are vehemently assailed, and the very principles against which it was originally directed, are again striving for the mastery. If we now are deterred by the difficulty of certain parts of Scripture from endeavouring to explain them, we serve the purposes of those to whom these very parts of Scripture are most unwelcome, and we encourage that notion of the difficulty of Scripture altogether, which leads immediately to that other notion, that therefore we had much better despair of explaining it for ourselves, and listen to a supposed infallible interpreter of it. Something, it is evident, the Galatian Christians had done or believed to which St. Paul strongly objected. Thus much appears from the text, and from the verses which immediately follow it; it appears no less from several passages of the fourth and fifth chapters, in one of which he says plainly, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." We cannot think, therefore, that the evil which he combats was any thing trifling; it is certain at least that he did not so regard it. But if he did not

so regard it, much less can we regard it as trifling now. I confess that if we can carry ourselves back in thought to St. Paul's time, and observe the strength of his language, and then see what it was which he was so condemning, we may find it hard, looking at the question as it appeared on the surface of it to the men of that generation, to explain the earnestness of his censure. But with the history of eighteen hundred years to enlighten us, his language does indeed seem to have divinely anticipated the wants of coming generations; he seems rather to have had his eye fixed in vision on the full-grown evil of later times, than on the first imperfect show of it in his own. That other Gospel, as he calls it, which yet was not another; that other scheme of Christianity, which rather is a subversion of Christianity; then as it seems giving only faint indications of its character, undiscerned and unsuspected by common eyes, has since been put forth to the sight of all the world in its full development, speaking to the most careless in the language of its practical results. Christ's honour obscured, His law corrupted, His church utterly destroyed, so that now, eighteen hundred years and more after His resurrection, its very foundations, as it were, are to be laid afresh; these are the fruits of that system ripened which St. Paul saw only in the bud, but which in the bud as it was then, he was yet directed with such earnestness of language to condemn: "O foolish Galatians! who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?"

Explain the Epistle historically, and how inadequate do the facts at first sight appear to justify the strong condemnation of the Apostle. The Galatian Christians, so the historical commentator would say, had been persuaded to continue the practices enjoined by the law of Moses, practices not necessary for Christians, so the Apostles had

decided, yet ancient, striking in themselves, commanded by God Himself to the fathers, and which if adopted by the Gentile churches, would have the effect of uniting God's ancient people with His newly chosen, all visibly bearing the same seal, and walking in the same ordinances. Historically, this is what the Galatians did, and nō more. How is this reverent, this devout, this catholic spirit deserving of the name of the subversion of Christ's Gospel? Yet what does St. Paul say? "Behold I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." What! the reverent use of God's appointed ordinance, in order to a greater conformity with His ancient church, cause them to lose the benefit of Christ's salvation: and this too, when Paul himself circumcised Timotheus whose father was a Gentile, when he first took him out as his companion on his journeys? Surely there is something extraordinary in all this, which needs, which calls aloud for our careful attention, that we may be able to comprehend it.

But let us see what follows the words which I have just quoted, for it may be that the Apostle will explain himself. "Behold I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

Through some faults or obscurities of translation, the root of the whole matter does indeed here appear, but not so as that we can at once fully comprehend it. Only we see that this practice of circumcision is called a being justified by the law, and that he who tries to be so justified, is said to have fallen from grace: and then we remember the earnest language of the Epistle to the Romans, and

particularly of the tenth chapter, and comparing the two Epistles together, that to the Galatians written indeed on a particular occasion, but that to the Romans written to those whom the Apostle had never seen, on no particular subject, but as a general statement of the peculiar truths of that Gospel of Christ which he was everywhere preaching,— comparing, I say, the two Epistles together, that to the Galatians, and that to the Romans, we shall see what was St. Paul's Gospel, and what that other Gospel, which was not another, because it was rather no Gospel at all.

St. Paul's Gospel, as he himself tells us, was briefly this, "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." The first part of it was plain enough; the second was misrepresented from the beginning, and was indeed so sure to be misrepresented, that there must have been some strong reason for bringing it forward so prominently at all risks, and in this particular form. Doubtless it was misrepresented immediately to the churches of Judea; Paul, it was said, teaches men that if they believe the fact of Christ's resurrection, they are forthwith justified in the sight of God. Nay, said St. James, this is shocking and monstrous; for the devils believe the fact that there is one God, and yet they are not justified; and faith without works is dead. So St. James said, and so he was permitted to write, condemning most justly the misrepresented doctrine of St. Paul, in no way touching the doctrine itself. But although thus open to the most shocking misrepresentation, still St. Paul could not suppress the doctrine, nor qualify it, he could not help declaring that by faith men were justified; he could not help affirming to the Galatians, that if they sought to be justified by the law, they were not partakers of the justification of Christ.

What did he mean then, when he spoke so earnestly

against the law? Did he mean the law of ceremonies? Did he condemn circumcision, because it was regarded in the light of a moral act, as if God's favour could be won by forms or ritual observances? Certainly he did mean this, and justly, for men will not take a great deal of trouble for nothing; and he knew that wherever a system of outward ceremonies was enforced, they would be looked upon as valuable, however much this value was in words denied; the question for ever recurring, "If they are not valuable, why should we take the trouble of performing them?" And this is an eternal argument against the use of many outward ceremonies, or the imposing of them by public authority; because men will believe our actions more than our words, and when we require them to do a great number of things, telling them at the same time that they are in themselves of no value, we do but lose our labour; they will not believe a contradiction; being obliged to do the things, they will feel sure that they are not done for nothing. And this is one of the ways in which Christ's Gospel has been undermined; first by the ceremonies of the Jewish law, but presently afterwards by other ceremonies nominally Christian, but which were not Christian, and could not be so, inasmuch as they attacked the very main principle of Christianity, which places our justification in something wholly different, in Christ, and our faith in Him, and not in any outward acts or ceremonies whatever. It is then quite true, that St. Paul in condemning circumcision did condemn the law of ceremonies and forms, maintaining most decidedly that all such things were a snare, which would lead us away from our justification by Christ. Did he mean then to say only this, and is his great doctrine of justification by faith no more than a repetition of the old Scripture, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," or, "the sacrifices of God are a troubled spirit," &c.? Let any

man look at the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and see whether the law there spoken of means the ceremonial law. His Gospel, it is true, did contain in it the truth declared in many parts of the Old Testament, that ceremonies (in themselves) had no virtue, that he who trusted in them trusted on a broken reed, and would surely fall. But it contained another truth far greater, that as no man could be justified by the law of ceremonies, because of its inherent unprofitableness, so neither could any man be justified by the law of spiritual holiness, because of his imperfect fulfilment of it.

The fruit of the one tree, the tree of outward rites, grew within his reach, he could gather it, he could eat it; but it was like the apples of Sodom, fair only without, full of dust and emptiness within. But the fruit of the tree of holiness was a fruit unto life everlasting: he who eats of that fruit must live for ever; only it grew so high that man could not reach it; there it flourished in his sight, his eyes acknowledged its beauty, his soul knew that its taste was life, but his hands could not gather it. And if he had turned assiduously to look after the fruits which fell to the ground, and had picked them up bruised and soiled as they were, and had eaten them, and called them the fruits of the tree of life even in that spoiled state, and said that by their virtue he should live for ever, what was he but deceiving himself, and mistaking the soiled and sadly injured fruit which he had picked up from the ground, mingled with the inevitable defilements of the earth on which it had fallen, for that pure and life-giving fruit which grew on the tree high up in the heavens, which would have been life to him indeed, but which no power or art of his could gather?

Therefore, and therefore only, not for any defect in holiness in itself, God forbid! not because virtue is not

essentially divine, but because what we call holiness and virtue are but the bruised and spoiled fruits which have fallen to the earth, and are not the same precious things with the fruits which God calls holiness and virtue; therefore, that we should not bow down to a vain thing, and put our trust in what was not trustworthy; St. Paul declared that by the fruits of neither tree could we be justified, neither by the ceremonies of the law, for they were vain, nor yet by the moral commandments of the law, for though holy and mighty to save in themselves, yet we could not keep them. And therefore declaring that by the law, whether ceremonial or moral, there would no flesh be justified, he set forth another justification, not of works, whether ceremonial or moral, but of faith in Jesus Christ, whom God gave as the propitiation for our sins. We have seen why he denied justification by works; because the works which we could do would not justify any man, and the works which could justify we could not do. And now we will proceed from this point on another occasion to explain, so far as we can, and are enabled to understand and to express it, the positive truth itself of justification by faith.

Only in the mean time, what help is there but that what I have said shall seem to some hard and utterly unprofitable; to others, put drily, and after the manner of man's discussions, and not as the living and spiritual truth, the fountain of all holy and pure affections, the seed of all acceptable practice and feeling in the sight of God. So it is, and so it must be, for explanation must be addressed to the understanding, and must be in itself somewhat cold. It is for those who have perceived a truth by their understanding, to give it over, if I may so speak, to other parts of their nature to feed upon, to draw from it its proper fruits. And these fruits Christian truth has

in abundance, although we may, it is true, refuse to gather them. But if you have understood and will remember what has been said to-day, and will carry it on in your minds to its conclusion, next Sunday, you will find, I trust, that the whole subject is nothing abstract, nor dry, nor cold; but deserves to be, and must be, the centre of all our religious affections, the mother of holiness and of love.

LECTURE XXXIII.

DIFFICULTIES RESPECTING JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

St. John vi. 28, 29.

Then said they unto Him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.

Before I proceed to the particular subject of my present lecture, I must just resume for a moment the conclusion of what I said last Sunday; in which it was said, that according to St. Paul's doctrine men could be justified in God's sight neither by the performance of outward rites and ceremonies, nor yet by works of real righteousness and holiness; they could be justified by neither, because the outward rites were of no value, and the perfect works of holiness were out of their power to do. It is of the utmost importance to keep this distinction clearly in mind, for

nothing can be more shocking than to place ceremonial and moral works on the same level with one another, and to suppose that the reason why we are justified by neither of them is because neither of them are of any value to salvation. Ceremonial works, it is true, are of no value, but moral are of the greatest, and while it is said that we are not justified by them, it is not owing to any fault or unworthiness on their part, but on ours; not that they are not in themselves precious, but that we do not fulfil them.

Farther, when we speak of moral works and of ceremonial works as being infinitely different, and when we say that the first have the greatest value, and the second none at all, it is at once to be understood that a moral work is not a particular act, but an act done in a particular way; that is, from certain motives and feelings. The very same thing may be a ceremonial work or a moral work, according to the state of mind under which it is done. As, for example, suppose that a man says a certain number of prayers daily, because he thinks that the mere saying them over has an effect in itself, without his being at all in earnest about the meaning of them: this is a ceremonial work. But let a man pray out of the strength and sincerity of his own feelings, because he hates sin and loves God, and craves God's help to hate sin more, and to love him better, then such a prayer is a moral work, a work of righteousness and holiness, so far as it is done in the spirit of repentance and faith; although when done in another spirit, it was no more than a formal or ceremonial work. And this applies to every work whatsoever; no act which can be named being a moral work in itself merely, but only as being at once the thing which we ought to do, and much more as being done in the spirit with which we ought to do it; for goodness is a matter of the heart, and the inward man, and not of outward action.

We say, then, that men cannot be justified by outward actions of any sort, because although they can do such actions, yet they are when done of no value to justify. Neither can men be justified by their moral actions, because although virtue in itself, or holiness, is worthy of all honour, yet our moral actions are not sufficiently pure, nor sufficiently habitual, to deserve in God's sight the name of virtue: what we do well is not done perfectly well, and it is mixed up with a great deal of evil.

Therefore God declares to us that we must be justified by faith: and this is repeated many times over in the Scriptures, not always in the same words when the same thing is meant, nor always expressing quite the same thing, when the words used are the same. But undoubtedly there is an excellence, a pre-eminence ascribed to faith in the New Testament, which forms one of the great peculiarities of the Scripture: insomuch that as in our Lord's words in the text, so in many other places, the great lesson inculcated is briefly this, "Believe and be saved."

Yet it is no less true that this lesson so expressed does not stand alone; we are told also that we shall be judged at the last day according to our works. This is St. Paul's own declaration in the fullest terms. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." And St. James, as is well known, does not hesitate to say in express words, that a man is justified in part by his works: language which is scarcely so strong as that of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it says, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which you have showed towards His name;" for by saying "God is not unrighteous to forget your work," the conclusion must be, if we take the words literally, that God would be unrighteous if he did forget it,

that is, that the works of love spoken of had an absolute claim of right upon God's reward; which would be at once the doctrine of merit, and a making of our salvation to be, in certain cases at least, a matter not of grace but of debt.

Why do I mention passages seemingly so opposite? Is it merely to involve the question in more difficulty, to represent the Scriptures as teaching nothing clearly about it, or as speaking contradictions, so that we must either cast off St. Paul on the one hand, or St. James and the Epistle to the Hebrews on the other? God forbid: I believe that here, as in other matters, the seeming contradictions of the Scripture are amongst its most precious lessons; and that by casting off any part of that revelation which God has, as it were, joined together as one, we should but impair the value of the other part which we retained. But I mention them to show, in the first place, the difficulty of the subject, and that it is very easy to fail in expressing what the Scripture means to convey altogether, so as to omit something which ought not to be omitted, and to put forward other things too prominently and too exclusively. And I mention them yet more to show that we ought not to be nice in finding fault with each other's language on such points, seeing that the language which we often condemn in one another is no more than what St. Paul on one hand, and St. James on the other, have said before us; have said, and have said also with no qualification expressed along with it; and yet it would be very rash, and very painful, to say that either of these apostles was inculcating error. Therefore, although a man's language may awaken suspicions in us, yet there is an absolute evil in tying every one down to precisely the same forms of expression; and what we find fault with may be no other than a different truth, and not at all an opposing error.

It seems an important rule to seek for the most exact

language on any subject in those writings which treat of it generally and directly, rather than in those where it is spoken of by the way, the notice of it arising out of some other matter which was the writer's particular subject at the time. And according to this rule, we should expect to gain the clearest view of this question of justification from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, because the very object of that Epistle is to give a clear notion of that very point, as the foundation of Christianity; and so far as we know there was nothing in the particular circumstances of those to whom it was written which makes it more applicable to them than to others. It would seem right, therefore, to explain St. Paul's language in other Epistles, when he may touch upon the same subject accidentally, by his language upon it in the Epistle to the Romans, where he has written upon it expressly; and to do the same also with the language of other parts of Scripture, where it is of the same sort; that is, where it notices the matter of justification rather in passing, as it were, and owing to some particular occasion leading to the mention of it, than as the general subject of the writing, which is to be unfolded fully, and with the utmost accuracy of expression.

Now it cannot be denied, that the faith on which St. Paul lays so much stress, in the Epistle to the Romans, is opposed to the works of the law in this sense; that he who would be justified by the law says to God, "Thou hast commanded certain things, and I have done them, therefore I have earned my wages"; whereas he who would be justified by faith says rather, "Thou hast commanded certain things, and I have not done them, therefore I have earned no wages, but thy displeasure; only I throw myself upon Thee as on a God who forgivest sin, whereof Thou hast given assurance to all men in that Thou hast given thine own Son to be a sacrifice for sin, that so there might

be forgiveness." The essence then of justification by works is a reliance on what we have done for ourselves; that of justification by faith, is a reliance on what God has done and will do for us. So far I think is clear; and taking a heathen, or a man who had never heard of Christ, and whose life had been full of sin, the answer as made to him seems quite intelligible and satisfactory; "You cannot be justified by works, but come to God, and throw yourself on His mercy for Christ's sake, and then He forgives you, and you are justified." And up to this point I do not know that any Christians would be found to disagree, if their language be interpreted fairly. But the difficulty lies beyond; take such a man ten years, or five years, or one year, or it may be a few weeks, or days, or even hours, after we had so spoken to him, and told him that he was justified by faith; he says it may be, "I feel that my life is still mixed with much of sin, that my heart is not towards God such as it should be. Am I still justified, or is the past justification undone by sins since committed; and if I can be justified again now by faith, can I be so yet a third time: and what is to be the end, and to what am I to look at last for justification, when my works seem still, as before, unable to bear the burden? But yet to claim forgiveness repeatedly after repeated sin seems abusing God's mercy, and doing dishonour to the blood of His Son. Works can justify at no time; faith, I can well understand, can justify once, but can it justify repeatedly?" What is any man to do, what is he to believe, when having early, perhaps, received his religious impressions, and having once come to God in and through Christ, he lives a long life afterwards, and in that long life sins daily? When he comes to depart from the body, where can be his hope? Or has he only to wish in vain that he had died the very instant when he had first believed, for then he could have

felt that he was fully forgiven and justified; then he had cast away his past evil and had come to Christ for pardon and salvation, but the evil had since returned within him, and with its revival the pardon and salvation must have passed away.

Now how is such a man, that is, how is each one of us, —for the case is ours,—how is each one of us putting such a question to be answered? Shall we say, as some do, that having been redeemed from sin to become servants of holiness, our lives are therefore to be holy; that Christ's Spirit was given us to make them so; that the plain question to be asked therefore is, are we holy? And if we are not, then what benefit have we from our justification? We are not now redeemed, although we might have been once; we are sinners, and as such are to be judged. Surely there is much of truth in this language; but then what hope does it leave for any of us? For it was the imperfection of our holiness which made Christ first needful to us, and yet we are still asked whether we are holy; holy, that is, according to God's judgment of holiness, for as to holy in man's sense of the term, that will serve us nothing. We were but mocked, then, with a prospect of redemption, which could only have been effectual, had we died the very instant that we first embraced it. We are again called to produce our works, and again we must confess that we are sinners. God be merciful to us, for without His pardon we are again lost.

Or shall we say again, as others have said, — fear not, only believe; Christ is mighty to save His own, and He has saved and will save you to the uttermost. Even at the last hour of life, as at the first moment when you come to Him, you are His redeemed. And surely this too is scriptural language, there is much of God's truth here. Yet again, Christ may save those who have been sinners, will He save those who are sinners still? He will save

His own to the uttermost: but are not His own the holy and the good? Or if it be His glory to save sinners, those who are as well as those who have been, is there not an accursed thought close at hand to whisper, "Then my continued sin is His greater glory." And what then becomes of watchfulness, what of self-denial, what of the victory of the Spirit over the flesh? Death is near, and there is a man of sinful heart and sinful life, not changed into Christ's image, yet claiming to be one of Christ's redeemed, because he believes that Christ has saved him. And is this Christ's gospel, is it indeed in this sense that Christ died for sinners?

See then how warily we should speak in this matter, speak whether in answer to others, or to ourselves. Surely the answer has not yet been found in what has been now given; with much of divinest truth there is clearly something missed or perverted, which causes us in both of the views given above to lose the perfect Gospel of God. If we must look to our holiness of life for assurance, is not that to build again upon the quicksand? Is not that to look to ourselves for salvation, and not to Christ, and to look where we must look in vain? Or if without looking to ourselves we look only to Christ, and hope and believe whilst we are full of sin, and look to be redeemed from death, because Christ has died, although we have never risen with Him again to a new life of holiness; is not this to make Christ the minister of sin, and to hope where God says that there is no hope? We must see, therefore, how it may be possible to see the truth of each of these views, and yet escape their error: and after having shown the difficulties of the question on the right and left, to see how far, with God's blessing, it may be possible to avoid them. And this, if God permits, shall be the subject of one more concluding lecture.

LECTURE XXXIV.

THE MEANING OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

St. John vi. 57.

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

Galatians ii. 20.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

These two passages, as it seems to me, speak the same language, and it is by following up the clue which they offer to us that we may arrive, I think, at the full scriptural truth concerning justification, which we now are seeking for. We may arrive at it, and yet we cannot. We may in one sense, for it is there to be seen; so far, at least, as that we may recognise any thing else but it, to be not altogether the true doctrine. Some jarring note there will be which our ears may have listened enough to the true heavenly music to perceive at once to be out of harmony. But yet, when we try to state our impression of the truth in our own words, it is like the copy of a master-work of painting, we see ourselves its inferiority, we see that it is not that very perfect thing which we so admired: it has lost something, we know not what or how, but it is no longer the very same. We must feel and acknowledge this defect in

our own representations of Scripture truth: we ought to make allowance for it no less when we find it in the representations of others.

Let us consider once again what we found to be the difficulties of this question of justification. Were they not, on the one hand, that if we laid the whole stress on our being forgiven and justified by Christ already, carelessness and great ungodliness were apt to steal upon us; Christ has done all for us, it were wronging Him to interfere with His work; His grace is glorified in our sinfulness. And on the other hand, if after the one justification once obtained by faith, all else is to be a matter of our own works to preserve or to recover our state of justification, is it not in the end placing the real justification in our works, and have we not, on the one hand, the notion of merit coming in as if we were saving and justifying ourselves, or else do we not take away the comfort of the Gospel promises, and leave ourselves in the fearing and ever restless state of those whose consciences were taxed by the law, which they knew they ought to fulfil but did not? In a word, the Scripture justification can neither be a minister unto sin, nor to pride, nor yet can it destroy itself and leave no man justified at all.

Now looking steadily at the two passages of Scripture which I have chosen for my text, we shall, as I said, gain the clue to the full Scriptural truth. First of all St. Paul, speaking of himself many years after his conversion, declares that he lives by faith in the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him. It is manifest then that the principle of a Christian life, after the knowledge of Christ had been received, was still to be "Faith in the Son of God who loved us, and gave Himself for us." The same faith which brought us *to* Christ is to keep us in our life afterwards *in* Christ, and it is, "Faith in the Son of God,

who loved us, and gave Himself for us." That is, I suppose, faith in Him as our Redeemer, that He has done for us by virtue of His death, what we could neither have done, nor do for ourselves, namely, made us at peace with God, placed us in the condition of God's children whom He has forgiven, and whom He loves. This faith entertained not once only, but always, ascribes clearly the whole merit of our justification to Christ; that for His sake God looks upon us, not as enemies but as children, not as condemned but as forgiven. And farther, the Scripture supposes, that whenever, and so far as we realize to our minds the fact that God has forgiven us, we are also drawn to love Him as His children; nay, that the two feelings are in fact inseparable; that faith in Christ's atonement places us necessarily in the state of loving children to God; that if we do not love Him, such want of love is clearly one way or another a want of faith in Christ; either that we do not believe that we needed the atonement, and therefore so far deny its reality, or do not believe that God has fully forgiven us, and so far deny its efficacy. But believing that we were without Christ dead, and that through Him we are alive and forgiven, that belief places us in the state of children towards God, with open and thankful hearts, loving Him because He first loved us. And if we sin and lose this feeling, for with every sin the cloud surely rises over our hearts, and the feeling of the slave succeeds to the feeling of the child, is not the repentance which we need exactly a restoration of our faith, as St. John says, "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins?" It is not, "If any man have sinned before he became a Christian," but if any man sin now; if he sin, the remedy is still faith, even as the cause of the sin was want of faith. "Christ is the propitiation for our sins." Again must we

realize to ourselves the truth of what He has done for us and what God for His sake feels towards us. Again must we realize the sense of our being forgiven, that God is our Father, that He looks upon us as His children. Why will we turn away and not look on Him as our Father? Thus, it seems even so far to be scripturally true, that our continued justification is faith; that our repentance or turning to God consists, not in going about to propitiate God by penances, or by prayers, or by any acts of virtue that we can practise, but in turning towards Him as His redeemed children, in believing in spite of our evil hearts that He has forgiven us, has saved us from an infinite depth, into which we fall again whenever we doubt either of our danger without Christ, or of our forgiveness with Him, and in thus looking towards Him again with unclouded brows and thankful hearts, grateful to Him and loving.

Even thus, I say, St. Paul's saying is justified, that by faith we establish the law; justified in this sense as in others, that the full impression of God's love in Christ is the most powerful motive in the world; and that he who is possessed with it habitually, that is, who lives by faith in the Son of God, will, out of mere thankfulness and love, and not in any manner as working his own justification thereby, fulfil the law more thoroughly than he would fulfil it on any other principle. And it is this moral impression, if I may use such a term, or to speak a better language, this constraining force of our real belief in God's love to us in Christ, to which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews alludes, when he says, that "the blood of Christ purges our consciences from dead works to serve the living God."

But yet I think that there is more in the Scripture than what I have hitherto given; a part of the doctrine of justification by faith most important to be acknowledged, a

part which the Scripture dwells upon very fully and frequently, but which we perhaps do not always remember as we should do. It is expressed in the text by St. Paul, where he says, that it is not he that is now alive, but Christ that liveth in him; and by our Lord, in words not the less clear because they are figurative, "He who eateth me, even he shall live by me."

St. Paul has said, in his Epistle to the Romans, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life." Faith in Christ is not only faith in His having died for us; it is faith in Him as our Saviour now also by His life; it is that throwing ourselves upon Him in all things, as our Redeemer, as our Saviour, as our Head of whom we are members, deriving our life only from Him, which is expressed by our Lord in those remarkable words, where He says, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." And here, if we take it rightly, is found the solution of the great difficulty, holiness without the sense of merit, strength without pride. It is true that our natural powers are God's gift, and yet men are proud of them. It may be said, therefore, that we may acknowledge our holiness to be the Holy Spirit's gift, and yet be proud of it; and so it might be, if the holiness were given once for all, to be improved by ourselves or neglected; but not so, if we realize the expressions of our Lord, "I am the vine, ye are the branches; without me ye can do nothing;" or those other expressions, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you;" "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me:" "I am the bread of life;" passages which with many others teach us, that our dependence on Christ is not once only, but perpetual; that in Him and through Him is all our life; that if at any time we sever our communion

with Him by walking as it were by ourselves, and doing our works as our own works, then our strength fails, even as our faith has failed; that at the very moment we lose our sense of being united to Christ as branches to the vine, and as deriving all our spiritual life from His Spirit, the supply of strength so to speak is stopped; showing us that as we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us, so in our own strength we can do nothing and by the deeds of the law, which we were endeavouring to do, there will no flesh be justified.

And thus it is true that our faith in Christ alone justifies: our faith in His death once, in His life evermore; our faith in Him as redemption, and as sanctification; our faith in Him as every thing, in ourselves as nothing; our faith in Him leading to union with Him, that so being His members truly we shall be with Him and in Him evermore. So that if at any time in our mortal life sin is besetting us, if we are walking sluggishly and coldly, not united to Christ, and therefore not to God in Christ, if earthly passions are strong within us, feelings of the flesh leading to works of the flesh, what language should be held out to us, what should we be told to do? Shall we be told to work God's holy law, to pray for His Holy Spirit, that we may be enabled to keep His commandments? Or shall we be told to believe that Christ has died for us? or shall we not rather be told to believe in Christ as in Him who died and rose again, and is alive for evermore; in Him whose death is indeed our sure warrant of confidence that God has forgiven and will forgive even to the end, but whose life is no less mighty to our salvation than His death, whose life must absorb our life, His strength wholly supplant our weakness, who calls us to Him to be one with Him in heart and soul, who will give us all that we need; even as He was in the days of His flesh, eyes to the blind,

feet to the lame, food to the hungry; strength to the weak, deliverance to him possessed with devils, and life to the dead? But if we ask again, "Are we so one with Him as to be heirs of His salvation, to be with Him for evermore, are our thoughts as His thoughts, is our heart as His heart;" or "are we aliens, has our faith failed, and are we left to our own strength which is nothing:" in one word, "Are we Christ's or are we our own? Surely there are cases where the answer cannot be doubtful for a moment; we are the one or the other quite certainly. Doubtful cases there are in great numbers, infinitely doubtful, and they must be so to the judgment of others, perhaps also doubtful to our own. Our feeling is, "Lord, we believe, help Thou our unbelief:" but whether the belief or the unbelief predominate we know not. And what human power can solve this doubt, and are not such cases as these the very cases which need that great day of Christ's own judgment, when he will determine whether hope or fear anticipated most truly, whether we were His, or His enemies? But if we are impatient of this suspense, and long to be answered, — and truly we do well to long for an answer, for there is great danger that at whatever moment or portion of our lives we ourselves were doubtful whether we were Christ's or no, that at that time Christ sees that we are not His,—if, therefore, we do long for the assurance of faith, that we are Christ's even now, and for the assurance of hope that we shall be His through His Spirit even to the day of Jesus Christ; is not the true thing to be said to us no other than this, "Draw near unto Christ, come unto Him, and He will give you rest; believe, and you will be saved?" It is not by a painful counting up of duties undone, and sins committed, and by a resolving ever so earnestly to be more careful in all these things for the time to come, that we can be saved;

by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. Much less is it by a fond trust in that which is utterly worthless; outward rites and ceremonies, or the belonging to what is in such a sense most falsely called Christ's holy church. We must belong to Christ's church through Him, to that church which will be His for ever, not to Him through His church. If the church by its constant teaching, by the living example of its members, speaks to us aloud to cling unto Christ as our only salvation, then the church does its part as a faithful witness to its Lord; but if it says to us, "Rest in me, trust in my ordinances, labour to do my works, abide in me, and as I am Christ's so shall ye be Christ's," then this is no voice of Christ's faithful spouse, but of the adulteress who had gone like her sister of old after her idols, who has left her Lord herself, and would fain tempt us to leave him too. Salvation is not there; no, nor in even the most faithful church which ever followed its Lord, but in Him only. Let us go to Him for salvation, to be one with Him, to share in His Spirit, and by His power to be delivered from sin, and to walk in holiness. But not to us or to our works belongs the victory. It is his only who by His death purchased for Himself the heirs of death, that they might become heirs of glory: and by His life has put into them a new life, that they might be His, because they were possessed by His Spirit. It is His victory, and our part in it is this only, that by our faith we gave ourselves up to His working, trusting in no other help than His, and so suffered Him to work out His own salvation in us.

LECTURE XXXV.

CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION.

St. Luke xxiii. 35.

And the people stood beholding.

It was our Lord upon the cross whom they were beholding, and they who so beheld Him were the mixed multitude which, with all sorts of feelings, poured out of the walls of Jerusalem to see the spectacle. And so it is still; Christ is crucified among us daily, and the people stand beholding.

They stand beholding, an infinite variety of persons with an infinite variety of feelings, even as the multitude who then stood around His cross. There was His mother, and there was His beloved disciple; there was the centurion; there were the women of His acquaintance, and the women of Jerusalem generally; there were the Roman soldiers, there were the common Jews, there were the rulers and chief priests and scribes, beholding as they thought the accomplishment of their work. These beheld Him, standing around, or at a little distance from His cross. Nor were there wanting others who beheld Him, themselves being to mortal eyes invisible, the angels of God, who looked with awe and adoration upon that infinite display of God's love. They too are beholding Him now, crucified as he is again daily amongst us.

We may, if we will, apply this in two ways; we may apply it to ourselves, this present congregation, at this

present season, beholding so to speak the representation of Christ crucified in the services of this week, and in the communion of next Sunday. In this sense it may be said, "The people stand beholding Him." Or again we may apply it to ourselves, still to this present congregation, in another sense; as beholding Christ crucified, not in the historical representation of it given in the Scriptures, and read out to us in the Church services; but actually according to the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the sins which His people are daily committing; we standing and looking on the while, and regarding it very differently some of us from others.

And lastly, if I may so speak, we behold Christ crucified in yet another sense: we each are guilty of sin, we each look upon ourselves thus sinning and having sinned with a great variety of feelings; our minds do not always keep the same temper; in one and the same heart, as various moods prevail, there is sorrow, there is seriousness, there is indifference, there is even hatred and scorn; another aspect of the words contained in the text, "And the people stood beholding."

Now, in the first place, let us apply the words to ourselves, and to the services of this week. Already the sufferings and death of our Lord have been brought before us in the Lessons, and in the Gospel of this day; then on Wednesday, when we usually assemble in this place, they will be brought before us again; and yet again on Friday. We know that the Gospel for every day in this week is taken from the Scriptures which describe our Lord's death; the Epistle and some of the Lessons also more or less exclusively relate to it. The mere outward and formal difference of this week cannot escape the observation of the most careless; we cannot but distinguish it from other weeks. Therefore the representation of Christ crucified is

set before us: we stand beholding, more or less attentively indeed, and with more or less of interest, but we all stand beholding.

Amongst those who stood round his actual cross, there were, as we have seen, great varieties. There was our Lord's mother, and his beloved disciple John, and there were the chief priests and scribes; there were thus the very extremes of love and of hatred. Each of these in any thing like the same intenseness cannot be supposed to exist here: who of us loves Him as his mother and as St. John loved Him? Who of us hates Him as the chief priests hated Him? But between these extremes were there not still great differences? The women of Jerusalem weeping with compassion; the centurion observing seriously and fairly; the Roman soldiers caring for nothing but to get each man their share of His raiment; the scornful multitude who said, "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come and save him." Have we not amongst ourselves resemblances at least of all these? Have we not some who feel that he suffered for us? Have we not some who think seriously; have we not some who think only of what outward good things they get from Him, food and clothing, and pleasure of every sort: nay, have we not some also who have heard and have listened and will not heed; who know what sin is, yet sin deliberately; who put conscience aside, and turn away from Christ's Spirit in defiance? Some of all these kinds of persons, God only knows how strongly bearing the character of any or in what proportions to one another, are surely here this day, beholding the Church's yearly representation of Christ crucified. Let each ask himself, which character is his own.

But one thing I will say; those whom I compared to the Roman soldiers, to the soldiers who were sitting beneath the cross casting lots for our Lord's raiment; those whom

I fear I must suppose to be a large portion of our number, who sit here to-day, and will sit here on Wednesday, and on Friday, utterly unconcerned in what is going on; thinking only as they think always, of something to be enjoyed or some pleasant thing to be done, or unpleasant thing to be avoided; of something in short very near them, in their hands, or within their near view, something worldly, something in which God and God's service have no part at all; all these persons have by no means the same excuse for their indifference which the Roman soldiers had for theirs. Christ is not to them wholly unknown as he was to those soldiers; their teaching, let them have derived ever so little good from it, has been far more than ever fell to the lot of those poor Romans. We have noticed from time to time in the course of our common studies, how miserable was the moral education which could be gained at that time among the heathens, even by those whose circumstances were most favourable. What do we think it must have been for the common soldiers of the legions; what had been the lessons of their childhood or youth, what the experience of their manhood? Not in vain, depend upon it, were holy names spoken to you from your earliest years; and you were told of God and Christ, and heaven and hell; and were taught to pray, — ay, and have prayed sometimes, I doubt not, even the very most careless and most ignorant of you all. Nor yet is it in vain that these same lessons are still repeated to you here; let it be repeated ever so imperfectly, ever so scantily; let it be that such teaching is but as one little drop amidst streams of an opposite power, still you cannot get rid of the fact that you have had more than a heathen's teaching; the very walls of this building, meeting your eyes as they do every day, are themselves a witness; your sin in sitting in perfect carelessness as it were beneath Christ's cross,

and thinking only of your earthly pleasures and inconveniences, must be far greater than the sin of those soldiers who cast lots for Christ's raiment.

And now let us apply the text in its second sense. We stand beholding Christ crucified, not to-day only, nor Wednesday, nor Friday only, nor beholding Him in the Scripture representation of what He suffered once on Calvary; but every day beholding Him crucified afresh,—I speak the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews,—crucified afresh in the sins that are committed amongst us; committed amongst us, I am saying now, not committed by ourselves individually. I am considering how we look upon the sin which is done daily within our sight and knowledge by those amonget whom we are living. Again, have not we resemblances of those different sorts of persons who stood around the cross? I should be very sorry to think that no one beheld Christ thus crucified with sorrow, that none so much as beheld with serious attention. Can it be really that the many sorts of evil, the want of positive good being one of the very worst of all, which present themselves to us every day, should be to all of us a matter of absolute indifference? Consider that so far as we are not such a society as Christ's people will be hereafter in heaven, so far sin is corrupting us, and dishonouring our Lord. Of course I know that there are some things in which, without any fault of ours, our condition cannot be what that of Christ's people will be when they are with Him. So far as bodily pain affects us, brought on by no fault of ourselves or others, so far as sickness makes us uncomfortable, or the innocent troubles of our friends, or their being taken away from us, so far I grant Christ's truest people on earth will ever be different from His people in heaven. But set aside these things, and what differences remain are surely differences caused by sin; differences

caused by want of faith, want of hope, want of purity, want of truth, want of meekness, want of love; differences caused by unbelief, by indifference, by greediness, by falsehood, by pride, by hardness and the love of giving pain, by slothfulness and selfishness. Can it be that we see ourselves so different from what Christ's people should be, and that not one of us thinks seriously about it, not one of us grieves for it? It is but too certain that many do not care about it in the least; nay, it is to be feared that here we have really something like the very feeling of the chief priests and scribes, who looked on upon the sight of Christ crucified, and rejoiced at it. I am afraid that some almost take a pleasure in the state of sin which they see around them, at least that they would and do oppose and view with suspicion and dislike all attempts to make it better. Even to this hour, after so many years' experience, my astonishment at this is as fresh as ever; I wonder, and ever shall wonder, I hope, not that there are some who do evil, but that there are so many who do not hate it when done by others. I can understand our being over-indulgent to our own faults; I can understand that self-love should get the better of conscience; or that a great temptation being before us we should be found often to yield to it. But that sin should not be hateful when there is no self-love to blind us; that evil should not be abhorred even when no temptation is present; this does seem to me very wonderful and very shocking. It seems to show an habitual and deliberate turning away from Christ, which really reminds one of the rancour of the chief priests, or at any rate of those who said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It says that the common state of our minds is one of apostasy; that when no particular temptation is present, in cool blood, as it were, and constantly, we look upon Christ crucified among us, and we are absolutely without a single wish that it should not be so.

It is but too certain that as long as we care not to see Christ crucified by others, so long we shall never be careful not to crucify Him ourselves. This was the last point which I spoke of; how differently at different times we behold Him crucified as it were in our own hearts by our own sin; sometimes I trust being penitent, and sometimes being serious; but more commonly I fear being careless, and sometimes being hard and wilfully rebellious. Now it may be that one who hates evil very sincerely, may yet sometimes under strong temptation yield to it: he may grieve to see Christ crucified by others, and yet may crucify Him by his own sin. This is not hypocrisy but human weakness, which does not bring its practice fully up to the level of its principles, even though it holds the principles most truly. But who will care for evil in himself being tempted to it, when he does not care for it in another, where he has no temptation to make him tolerant of it? Who will scruple to commit a sin himself when he has occasion, if he sees the sin committed by others with entire indifference? Who will shrink from lying, or from any other sin, in his own person, if these things give him no disgust when he sees them in another? It is quite certain that he cannot hate them, and not hating sin, it is quite certain that he cannot love God.

"The people," says the Evangelist, "who came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned." The soldiers were indifferent, the chief priests triumphant; but the general feeling was sorrow; when they had seen that all was over, the multitude in general, who had stood beholding, smote their breasts and returned. We know not how soon the impression melted away again from many of them; but for the time at least it was general, and with many we may believe that it was lasting. O that it might be so with us, in

either of the applications of the text which I have been making! that from our sight of Christ crucified as represented in this week's solemn services, or as daily and every week set forth in the sin committed all around us, or by ourselves; the generality of us might turn away truly grieving; that from that sight, under whatever form exhibited to us, we might derive a hatred of sin with all our hearts and souls, whenever we see it in others, or in ourselves! I do not say for an instant "hatred of those in whom sin is," for as we certainly shall never hate ourselves, so neither should we hate others in whom sin may be manifested; but the sin itself, whether in ourselves or others, we should hate with a perfect hatred; for the strength of that hatred of sin is the exact measure of the strength of our love of Christ. We should hate it and make war upon it unceasingly, to destroy it utterly out of all our coasts; for this is the lesson of the destruction of the Canaanites with all that belonged to them; that we should hold no intercourse with it, make no peace with it, allow it not the least harbour amongst us; that having overcome that deadly enemy which crucified and crucifies our Lord continually, we may turn to Him with joy, and share with Him in the glory of His resurrection.

LECTURE XXXVI.

CHRIST'S PROMISE.

St. Matthew xxviii. 20.

Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

Our blessed Lord has on this day by His resurrection from the dead established the kingdom of God. While He was on earth it could only be said that the kingdom of God was at hand,—it was not actually come. But as soon as he rose from the dead, He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and that state of things was then begun which is to go on till the time of His coming again.

Long as the time might be before His second coming, still the kingdom of God was never to fail, nor would Christ ever forsake His people. His words are, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Yet in a short time He was to leave His disciples and return unto His Father, and He was not, and could not be with them as heretofore. Not as heretofore, but yet He was to be with them; insomuch that where no signs of His presence are manifest, there cannot be His people; but a people who, whether called by His name or no, are really strangers to Him. For God's promises never fail but through man's fault: if Christ has promised to be with His people always to the end of the world, and if He is not with them, or with any of them, those from whom He is so absent must have cut themselves off from being His. He was ready to be with them, but they would not receive Him.

So considered, all the Scripture promises are full of instruction, alike when fulfilled or not fulfilled. Every Scripture promise not fulfilled speaks a solemn lesson. God cannot lie; but His promises always imply that we do not set ourselves against their accomplishment; He will do His part, the means of grace shall be given, the blessing is ready to fall upon the use of them; but still He will not overrule man's will so that he shall of necessity use them. And if man will not use the means of grace, then he cannot see the fulfilment of the promised blessing. And thus whenever the promised blessing is wanting, it is the visible sign of something left undone, or done ill on our parts, which, so long as it continues, must for ever, as now, keep the blessing from us.

But instead of this true and wholesome way of regarding God's promises, men have had recourse to another. Instead of seeking for the cause of the non-fulfilment of a promise in themselves and their own evil, they have declared that the promise was fulfilled. They have deceived themselves and others; lying against the most evident truth, and declaring that to be, which with the most positive certainty, was not. They have, for instance, in this very passage found Christ's promise to be fulfilled where it was not, thus leading men to think that He was present when His absence ought to have set them rather to seek for Him, and to ask why He was absent. They have talked of His being present in a fancied succession of ministers, in baptism, and in the Lord's supper: as if, supposing only we had these things, then we must have Christ; as if the fulfilment of His promise was to be found in any outward ordinances, even in those of His own appointing, much less in things of man's mere device which He never commanded at all. They have talked of a secret presence, not secret merely as to the manner of it, but

secret as furnishing no evidence of itself; so secret that none could discern or feel it with any sense or power of our nature, whether of body, soul, or spirit. And by this notion of a secret presence of Christ, or of Christ's Spirit, they have conceived what is not only a folly gross as that of the grossest idolatry of old, but they have directly contradicted our Lord's words, where He says of the Spirit, that although no man knows whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, yet that he hears the sound of it. Conceive what he would say who were to insist that the wind was blowing, when not the faintest stir was heard in the air, and the smallest leaf on the lightest spray was resting motionless. Yet he would not speak more madly, nor nearly with so deadly a falsehood, as those who say that Christ and Christ's Spirit are necessarily present, where there is neither to be seen wisdom, nor righteousness, nor love.

In the old dispensation God deigned to abide visibly amongst His people when He did not abide in their hearts; and when the light and glory were departed from the mercy seat, men did not fondly insist upon it that they were still there, and that the glory of the second temple could not be less than that of the first temple; they saw, and knew that it was less, and good men mourned for it, and comforted themselves with the word of prophecy, which told them that the glory of the second house should one day be greater than that of the former, because the Lord Himself with a more perfect manifestation of Himself should visit it. But when Christ was less present with His people under the new dispensation, when the outward signs of His power were withdrawn, and falsehood and sin began to pollute His living temple, men did not open their eyes to see and acknowledge the change, but they closed them harder and harder, and went on repeating that Christ must ever be present, and that His church must ever be

possessed by His Spirit, when their own lie was driving His Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth, farther and farther from them, till not Christ nor Christ's Spirit, but the very great enemy himself took his seat in the holy precinct, and called himself God, and was called so by those who worshipped him.

So it was; and again voices are busy in repeating the same falsehood; in talking loudly about holy times, and holy things, and holy places, and saying that Christ is there. Oh! blessedness above all blessedness, if indeed He were there, for then were the church perfected! For if He be verily present always in His ordinances, and much more if He be present indeed in any place made with hands, it must show that He is indeed truly present in His church, that is, in the hearts of His people, and that out of the abundance of His presence there, even outward things partake of it. For so it is, that when the most inland creek begins to feel the coming in of the tide, and the living water covers the blank waste of mud and gravel which was lying bare and dreary, then we know that the tide runs full and strong in the main river, and that the creek is but refreshed out of its abundance. But who will ever see the little inland creeks filled, when the main river itself is so shallow that men can go over dry-shod? And who will ask the tide to fill those remote and small corners in the first instance, as if they were to make up for the shallowness of the great river? Not through outward ordinances, even the holiest, does the church become holy; but if it might once become holy by the presence of Christ's Holy Spirit in every heart, then its ordinances would indeed be holy also; we might say that Christ was in them then, and we should say so truly.

Look at us here:—we want no outward ordinance; we have a ministry, we have the sacraments; is Christ there-

fore with us? He is ready to be with us, that is our Christian privilege, and of that His ministry and sacraments are a visible sign; they tell us plainly and truly that all things are ours if we will but have them; Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life and death, yea, greater things even than all these, redemption, sanctification, Christ and God. Signs they are of God's readiness to come to us; but they will not bring Him to us. They will help us to gain Him if we strive earnestly to do so, but in themselves He is not. The promise, "I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," has a far deeper and more blessed meaning than the perpetual existence of the sacraments, and much more than the existence of any particular order of persons to administer them.

A few years ago there would have been no need to use such language as this anywhere, least of all here. There was then no fear generally in this country of any person's overvaluing the sacraments or the ministry; the danger was rather the other way. But now we are on a sudden brought back to ages which we had known only in history. Evils which we had fancied to be gone by for ever are spreading their poison far and wide around us. So we fancied that pestilences were gone from Europe never to return; but God thought fit to send a pestilence, and human art was as powerless to meet it as it had been in the times of the pestilences of old. We thought that any child who had been taught in the Scriptures could see the falsehood of popery; we almost wondered how our fathers could have spoken so earnestly against what seemed so little formidable. But we have lived to see, not children only, but teachers, or at least those who by their office ought to have been teachers, carried away as easily by the worst errors of popery, as the strongest men were stricken down and cut off in a few hours, ten years ago,

by the visitations of the pestilence. Wherefore "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And let us never think that a falsehood is become powerless by mere disuse; it is rather so much the more dangerous, because from its strangeness men do not know how to meet it. Neither will the possession of the Scriptures save us; for Christ is not necessarily in them any more than He is necessarily in the holy communion; the Scriptures may be read, as the communion may be received, and yet Christ may not be with us.

These are the days at any rate, to do what indeed all times require, and the neglect of which in times past led greatly to this present mischief; these are the days to speak loudly, that salvation to each of us is the presence of Christ in our own individual souls, the realizing, in short, of that promise which He gave to His disciples in the words of the text. Either we have Christ with us, or that promise is our warrant for being sure that His absence is not His fault but ours; that He will be with us if we seek Him, and open our hearts to receive Him. But what we want, and what He has promised, is His personal presence with ourselves. It is not His presence with the church that will save us, but His presence in our own hearts. His presence with the church, that is, with other Christians, will doubtless save them; but they are not our saviours, nor must we look for our safety from them. The point for us to seek is that He should be present with us; that our own personal faith should apprehend Him, our own personal love cleave to Him. Then He is with us, and we with Him, then are we His and shall be His at the great day.

Great was the pleasure which it gave me to see so many of you assembled at the Lord's table this day. We rejoice to see our brethren taking hold of what may be a means of grace; we hope naturally that it will be so to them. But

Christ is in the holy communion only to those to whom He is present at other times; we apprehend Him by faith, and if faith is not in us, then neither is Christ in the sacrament. Do not say, "because I have received the communion, therefore I have received Christ;" but rather, "because I have received the communion according to Christ's ordinance, therefore I hope that it will be to me a means of receiving Christ, and that by the use of that and the other means of grace I shall receive Him." But the point to be satisfied of is, not whether you have eaten and drunken the bread and wine of the communion, but whether Christ the most Holy, He whom after the flesh we know no more, is present with us, as a Spirit with spirits, possessing our inmost souls.

Perfectly we dare not hope that He will be, till we see Him as He is, but that He will be with us truly and effectually, this it is not extravagant to hope for, but it is death to despair of it. We come to Him as already His, so far as His good will is concerned; this is, as I said before, our Christian privilege, we belong to His people visibly, we are authorized to call Him our Saviour, because we have been baptized into His name. Our life's work it is to realize to ourselves, individually, what is true at first of us by a charitable presumption, which calls us saved because Christ wills us to be so. This we must make a real personal truth by our personal prayer and watchfulness, aided, it may be, by the prayers of others, for as we should be forward to pray for others, so we should desire that others would pray for us; aided by others' prayers, but yet not so as to take from ourselves the stress of the matter; we must ourselves draw near to Christ, drawn to Him by God; man's help can be but secondary. When we find our spirits becoming conformed to Christ's Spirit, when we find ourselves shrinking from sin more and more, and loving Christ more

and more, then we shall feel that Christ's promise has reached even to us. Then we shall have our own comfort, in which no stranger intermeddles; our own faith, not resting on men, or outward institutions, but on the apprehension of things divine by the personal act of our own souls; our own salvation, because we are one with Christ and Christ with us, whether the Church, that is, the company of other men who should in like manner have each realized His promise to themselves, be truly as well as nominally one with Him, whether it be, as it ought to be, the pillar and ground of truth, holy and without blemish, or whether it be gone astray after its idols, and antichrist sits enthroned in the midst of it.

A PRAYER,

WRITTEN FOR THE EVENING OF EASTER DAY.

O LORD God Almighty, we thank Thee that Thou hast brought us safely to see another return of this day, and to share in the services of Thy church in commemoration of Thy blessed Son's resurrection. Grant to us all, that these services may not pass away wholly without fruit; that this and others of the festivals of the church may find us every year not less but more fit and disposed to celebrate them worthily, and more thankful to Thee for the benefits which they are intended to celebrate.

We pray of Thee to forgive us for all our inattention and carelessness during Thy worship this day. Teach us to feel that such inattention is a mark of the state of our souls; that we attend to all that we care for, and that if

we do not attend to Thy word, and to our prayers and praises of Thee, it is because our hearts are indifferent to Thee. Grant that we may feel our own state more truly, and then the tidings of salvation will not be heard with indifference.

If we have derived any good from any part of the public worship this day, grant that it be not lost to us. Encourage every thought of good which Thou hast put into our minds, and strengthen every such thought, and add to them. Let not the thoughts and pleasures of our daily life steal them from us, but let them be kept alive to bring forth fruit daily. Let Thy word be continually more plain to us, and more welcome; let it be continually more and more pleasant to us to pray to Thee. Encourage our great weakness by some of Thy gracious answers to our prayers, that feeling the comfort of Thy help we may not fail ever to ask for it.

We pray to Thee for all our relations and friends in all places. May this day have been to them all a day of happiness and spiritual blessing. Assist us to remember them in our prayers, according to our bounden duty, praying for them and for us that we may be drawn together to Thee and kept with Thee always. Give Thy blessing upon our particular work here, and bless this school. Grant to us Thy Spirit of wisdom, that we may use the means which Thou hast put within our reach, and that we may be truly benefited by all our teaching, and learn to know Thee and Thy Son Jesus Christ.

Bring home to our hearts with power the lesson of Thy Son's resurrection. Grant that we may have our resurrection likewise, from the death of sin first, and also from the death of the body. Grant that we may hear Thy Son's call with joy, and obey it, when He bids us to arise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and when He bids us come out of our graves and come to judg-

ment. May we too rise from death, and be with Thy Son ever.

Finally, we give Thee our humble thanks for all Thy goodness to us, as this day, so always. We bless Thee for all our many earthly blessings, our health and strength and plenty. Above all, we bless Thee for our spiritual blessings, and for the means of grace which Thou hast vouchsafed to us in the holy communion.

May all of us who went this day to Thy holy table retain Thy blessing in our hearts, filling us with love to Thee, and to one another. May we not be of the number of those who draw back from where they once stood, but of those who push forward to win their crown.

God be merciful to us, sinners, and bless us, and give us grace to follow our Lord Jesus Christ in life and in death, and to hold fast to Him in faith, and to cast our sins down, and to take up our cross daily at the foot of His cross, and to put our whole trust in Him to forgive us and to heal us.

Blessed be Thy holy name now and evermore, and hear us, and grant our petitions for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer.

LECTURE XXXVII.

GOD AND CHRIST AND OUR OWN SOULS.

DEUTERONOMY iv. 9.

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons.

THE veriest stranger who ever attends divine service in this chapel is apt to be struck with the peculiar character of the congregation here assembled. He sees almost the whole congregation to consist of persons in early youth, and exhibiting the various stages of youth, from the earliest boyhood to the very edge of manhood. He thinks too that those here assembled are not like a common congregation, the majority of whom are fixed for life, or at least for a term of which there is no definite limit, to the place where they are now assembled. But our congregation will of necessity within a few years be all scattered to the four winds of heaven; we should look for its several members anywhere rather than here. Again, take even a congregation such as ours in any other country, and although we know that in a short time it will be dispersed from the place where we actually behold it, yet still it will be dispersed only within narrow limits, the limits of the country to which it belongs. But our country spreads forth her arms so widely that the scattering of the members of an English school by the various circumstances of life,

is literally a scattering over the whole habitable world; there is no distance so great to which it is not within probability that some of our congregation may betake themselves. And yet once again; those very distant countries, those ends of the earth to which some of us may in the course of things be led, are new settlements, with a small population, with institutions, habits, and national character unformed as yet, and to be formed; unformed, and capable therefore in their unsettled state of being influenced greatly by the conduct and character even of a single individual, so that, putting all these things together, a stranger does well to feel something more than a common interest in the sight of the congregation assembled within this chapel, as it is this day.

But if the sight so interests a stranger, what should it be to ourselves, both to you and to me? It has not to us indeed the interest of novelty, we see it every week and every month; there is nothing in the sight of the congregation now before me differing from what I have seen now for many years. It is very true; and therefore if novelty alone can interest us, there is no interest for us in the sight around us. But if we are not such mere children as to be excited only by what is new; if the most momentous truths in the world are those which we have heard from our childhood, and have had repeated to us ever since continually; and if, even supposing that we are not habitually alive to their importance, yet surely we sometimes are so, not because they are more striking in themselves at one time than another, but because we are sometimes more awake to them; then the sight of you here, although familiar enough to us all, and often perhaps unregarded, has yet a real interest nothing lessened by its familiarity; an interest to which we may be at some moments peculiarly alive, and which we do well to indulge, because it is founded

on the simplest truth, and may and ought to be useful in exciting us in our practice to what is right, and good, and holy.

Now whatever occurs of unusual interest in the world strikes in this way upon an answering key within our breasts here. Whatever of striking good or of evil happens in any part of the wide range of English dominion, declares upon what important scenes some of you may be called upon to enter. And seeing and hearing the distant battle, is it not very natural to wish that those who may be called to take part in it should be well armed and well trained for the contest; that however trying may be the outward circumstances in which you will have to act, you may not be false to yourselves and to your duty; that you may be so armed with all a Christian's armour, as in all places and circumstances to do a Christian's part, worthily, wisely, and zealously, in doing or in bearing?

Or so again, whatever new and important things take place in the world of thought, whatever habits of mind we see prevailing, whatever truths honoured or despised, whatever errors predominant, can we help thinking of you in this also, and wishing, if it were possible, that here too you might be endowed with the spirit of wisdom and power; that when you go forth amid the strife of tongues and of minds, you may be able not only to hold fast the truth yourselves, but if it may be, that you may be the blessed instruments of maintaining the knowledge and love of truth in others?

And then we consider the manifold differences of human character, how unlike one of you is from another, how in each there is his own peculiar danger, and also his own peculiar gift and aptness to receive the grace of God. We see the immense difficulty of dealing with minds so various in the way that each most requires, and we gain a real ex-

perience of what St. Paul meant, when, looking upon the work and difficulties of a Christian teacher, he asked, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

But one thing is clear, and of the last importance, and to be pressed most earnestly upon the minds of every one of you: that in the business of life, be it what it will, and where it will, in the business of life, which you know is also the seed of eternity, and as such infinitely precious; three parties there are concerned, of whose existence it behoves us to be equally and intensely conscious; three, and in the real deep struggle for life and death, three only; three only, but three always; and these three are God, on the one hand, and your own individual souls on the other, and the one Mediator Jesus Christ, who alone can join the two into one. Lose sight of one of these three, and what becomes of us? Lose sight of God and we lose sight also of the Mediator by necessity, for there is nothing left but our own single soul, and a mediator is not a mediator of one. Lose sight of the one Mediator, and we lose sight no less surely of the one true God, for to Him there is no access for living man but only through the Mediator, His Son Jesus Christ. And finally, lose sight of your own individual souls, try to sink their personal existence in that of other men, call their belief your belief, and surrender your conscience to their conscience, and then also we lose the one true Mediator, putting other and false mediators in His place, and they cannot keep the individual soul alive as He does; but they weaken and destroy it, and we who should be living stones in a living temple, with our own personal life vigorous, our own faith and our own love, become dead stones in a dead building, and we lose God as we have lost Christ, for God is not a God of the dead.

These, then, are the three which it becomes us to realize

to ourselves most strongly, all the days of our life, and hold fast to them, and let nothing obscure our sense of either of them; God, and Christ, and our own individual soul, which Christ has purchased by His blood, and by His Spirit will unite to God, that it may itself know and love God for ever.

I have put this generally, but I will endeavour to state it more clearly, especially what I mean by the importance of keeping alive our sense of our own individual soul, of living in ourselves and not pretending to live (for live really we cannot) in the life of others. And observe, that he who were to say merely, "Keep alive your sense of your own individual souls," would say in effect, "Be intensely selfish, be miserable idolaters;"—idolaters of self, that worst idolatry of all. But what was said was that we should try to bear three in mind, and not one only; not our own souls merely, but our own souls and God, and Jesus Christ the one Mediator. There is all the difference in the world between saying, Bear yourselves in mind, and saying, Bear in mind always the three, God, and Christ, and yourselves, whom Christ unites to God. For then there is no risk of selfishness, nor of idolatry, whether of ourselves or of any thing else; we do but desire to keep alive and vigorous not any false or evil life in us, but our true and most precious life, the life of God in and through His Son. But what we see happen very often is just the opposite to this. The life in ourselves, of which we are keenly conscious, never for an instant forgetting it, is but the life of our appetites and passions, and this life is quite distinct from God and from Christ. But while this life is very vigorous, our better life slumbers; we have our own desires, and they are evil, but we take our neighbour's knowledge and faith and call them our own, and we often take our neighbour's conscience also, and what he says is right we think to be right,

and what he says is wrong we call wrong also; and so the words to us are words only, their real value we have never known; our souls do not aspire to God; for how can they, when the faculties by which they must apprehend Him are left unexercised?

Now here the habit is frequently acquired of living on without a consciousness of our own individual life, of living in and through others. Here it is seen in the common fault which I have so often spoken of, the living according to the fashion set by others, the conforming to others' judgments, and going after a multitude to do evil. And along with this there is also the common fault of catching up opinions in the same way from others, of holding certain notions because others hold them, and then of looking out for some plausible arguments in their behalf, to deceive ourselves, as if we really held them from conviction. Thus it really is true, that what in us is individual and earnest, is but our lower life, our sense not of truth and falsehood, good and evil, but of pleasantness, and painfulness. Here, it is true, our life is our own, we are not content with saying that we enjoy a thing because another enjoys it, we insist upon really enjoying for ourselves; though in matters of conviction and conscience, we are willing to think and feel only through others. And of this lower life we cannot rid ourselves, although we easily can of our better and higher life; or rather we can only render this lower life less vigorous by cherishing the vigour of the higher, and combining with it, as I said, the lively sense of God and of Christ.

From learning to live according to our neighbours' notions, the step comes next very naturally to believe according to his notions. We are ready to yield our assent to any prevailing opinion which has respectable names to countenance it, we take it on trust because they maintain

it, and then we are said to believe in it, and our authority perhaps may weigh with others and lead them to take it on trust in their turn. So that in this way opinions may be echoed by the mouths of thousands, but yet be really believed by very few, and that may claim assent because it is universally received, which in fact is believed by an infinitely small number, the mass who echo it having received it on trust, and entertaining no reasonable and personal conviction respecting it. So our nobler life shrinks up within us to nothing; our sense of truth perishes from want of exercise; truth is nothing, falsehood is nothing; our own minds have no clinging to the one, no instinctive shrinking from the other; they know either only by proxy, and that is not at all. For take a blind man and persuade him that he sees because we see, can he see therefore really, or can he have any notion whatever of that wonderful gift of sight which they who have eyes enjoy? Even so, truth cannot be known by those who have no appreciation of it within themselves; it cannot be known and it cannot be valued; and therefore all sorts of trickery and dishonesty, from which a mind knowing and loving truth shrinks with loathing inexpressible, are to minds which know truth by proxy a congenial element; they are to them nothing base, nothing disgusting, but an amusing exercise of ingenuity.

It is one great part of a Christian's armour that he should be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood; that he should know what it is truly to believe. And observe once again, that here too, combining a keen sense of our own soul's life with the sense of God and of Christ, there is no room for pride or presumption, but the very contrary. For what are our minds which perceive truth so livelily and believe it so firmly? What are they but minds gone astray from God by nature, blinded by a thousand weaknesses, and surrounded by darkness on every

side? All this is true, and therefore we hold our knowledge and our faith but as God's gift, and are sure of them only so far as His power, and wisdom, and goodness are our warrant. If we are confident, it is because we humbly trust, that — using the faculties which He has given us according to His will, when they speak decidedly, their assurance is His and not their own; we trust to them because it is His will that we should trust them. Our knowledge in fact is but faith, bold as such, but as knowledge simply at the mercy of every sceptic who may perplex us by affirming that we have no grounds for knowing any thing; no grounds for knowing as of ourselves, but great grounds for believing that God's appointed evidence is true, and that in believing it we are trusting Him.

The subject grows as we advance in it. Only thus far have we come already, and with this I will now conclude; that for our guidance in life we should ever feel a lively sense of the three parties in every one of our thoughts and actions, God and our own souls, and Christ the Mediator between God and our souls: and that one point of feeling a lively sense of our own souls, is to believe for ourselves, and not by proxy; to distinguish in our own minds between truth and falsehood; to discern truth and enjoy faith.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

OUR OWN SOULS WITHOUT GOD AND CHRIST.

DEUTERONOMY IX. 1.

Hear, O Israel: thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven.

IN my last lecture the point at which we arrived was this:— Looking at you as going to be scattered so soon, many of you to the remotest parts of the earth, as going to be called to a great variety of duties, we know not in many instances how new they may be to you, nor how important; we said it did become a matter of very great interest that you should go from hence, furnished, so far as we can furnish you, with the preparation for a Christian's course: and I said that, as a short form containing much in few words, it was desirable that we should bear three things ever in our minds, ever lively present, ever indissolubly united, God and Christ, and our souls; and that one thing meant, when I spoke of bearing our own souls ever consciously in our minds, was this, that we should have our own belief founded on our own convictions, and not taken on trust from any other man or men, whether of this present time or of the times that have gone before us.

Thus far we were come at the end of my last lecture. But it is manifest that the greatest part of our subject was

left as yet untouched; for I had spoken only of one point in the consciousness of our own soul's existence: of our consciousness of God and of Christ I had not spoken at all. Yet it cannot be supposed that the great or the only thing needed in our Christian course is to hold fast our own convictions. It is a great thing, a very great thing, quite essential to all excellence, but not *the* great thing, nor the only thing. We must not put any one point so forward as to obscure others; resolute individual conviction is a great matter; but is that resolute conviction to be the belief of evil or of good?

Let us see then what it is to hold fast with all our hearts and with all our souls, our sense of God and of Christ; what a great difference, *the* great difference in fact for time and for eternity, exists between us, either entering on the world, or as we go through the world, according as we do or do not live with God and to Christ. Consider what St. Paul said to the Athenians: "God hath given to all life and breath and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring." This was said by St. Paul to the Athenians, to whom God at that time had no otherwise revealed Himself than as He is seen in the works of nature, and the conscience of man. But though said to heathens, it is a solemn and a most humbling consideration, that to many who are called Christians it applies no less entirely. That is, although God be not far from every one of us, yet still many of us have no consciousness of His presence; for a large portion

of their lives they do not think of Him, and when they do, it is rather an uncertain feeling after Him amidst thick darkness, than the seeing Him in the clear light revealed in and by His Son Jesus Christ.

And these two states, — the seeing God constantly in Christ, and the not so seeing Him, and therefore wandering about in darkness, mostly without heeding it, but for some short intervals with a very keen sense of it, (it is indeed sometimes a darkness which may be felt,) — these two states are the great and eternal differences which will divide all of us here assembled from one another; the differences which will make and do make our lives holy or unholy, which will make our deaths blessed or cursed. Seeing you then as going forth upon an infinite voyage, what must we wish for you but that you should bear forth upon you and preserve always the seal of belonging to their number whose life is holy and their death blessed? We should think it madness if any of you were knowingly to go to sea on a voyage to the other end of the world in a ship without a compass, and with no one on board who could keep the reckoning. But what worse madness to go forth on our great voyage without God in our hearts, seeing that without Him our course is certain destruction, and with Him certain safety and certain success.

St. Paul spoke to the Athenians of men who were "feeling after God in the hope of finding Him, though He be not far from every one of us." This it is which is so striking; God's being near to us, around us, above us, within us, and yet the perfect possibility, to which too many can bear witness from their own experience, of living on without being in the least aware of Him, and in our most hopeful state of striving to feel after Him and find Him, straining our faculties as it were to realize the fact of His existence, as when we try to discern a very

distant object, and look earnestly, and look again and again, and think we see it but are not sure, and if we catch it for a moment lose it again, and perhaps cannot again find it. Two persons shall be living in the same society, their bodily senses equally sound, their faculties equally strong and uninjured, and yet one of them shall see and feel distinctly and consciously with his whole being, that of which the other has but an occasional and a hardly won belief. To the one, God is as much a part of his daily life as the common duties in which he is engaged, the common objects which he beholds, the common friends with whom he associates; he sees, feels, understands, and enjoys all that others see and feel, but he possesses, over and above, some other sense or faculty or gift which others have not; he has learnt to feel and to love God. It is most wonderful; and he who observes two persons, the one with this divine gift and the other without it, sees before his eyes an example on the one hand of the corruption of our nature, and how it is completely alienated from God, and on the other hand an example, no less striking, of the blessedness which we lost by sin, and which we may regain through grace.

I will try to describe, not with exaggeration but quite faithfully, that life without God which so many of us, old and young, have led and are still leading. Of course I am not speaking of a professed disbelief in God, which is hardly ever to be met with, but of that common state, in which God is not a part of our daily life. We go on without thinking of Him, and when we do think of Him we realize Him to our minds most imperfectly. Now it is quite true, I believe, that many who thus live do yet intend to keep and do keep actually many of God's laws, not, perhaps, distinctly as God's laws, though sometimes certainly even that, but at any rate as what is right and good

and their duty. It cannot be questioned that many persons, not at all living habitually to God, have yet a clear sense of right and wrong on a great many points, and like and follow the right, and dislike and avoid the wrong. They therefore feel for themselves, and others feel for them, that they are going forth into life with a certain principle to guide them, that they are attached to the side of good and averse to evil. Were this not so, the misery and danger of living without God would be as apparent as if the world of evil spirits were opened before our eyes, and the end were already a matter of sight. If all who were not true Christians were monsters, Satan's kingdom could not maintain itself for an hour, and earth would be no state of trial. It is precisely because there can be, and is up to a certain point, good without God, good, speaking in the common and in the Scriptural language, and not affecting metaphysical nicety; it is precisely because men feel that even without a lively sense of God Himself they can love His moral works as they can love His natural works, the beauty of virtue and truth as the beauty of the earth and the glory of the heavens; it is because their language so often agrees with the language of God's true children, because they can speak truth and do justice, and feel devoted love, that therefore they are blind themselves, and we too are often blind for them, to their infinite danger; they speak peace to themselves, and we echo the word till the true peace is hidden from them for ever. And this with the young, is a danger peculiarly great; because in very young persons to a large extent, in young persons simply to some extent, their earthly relations do stand in the place of God. Love and obedience to them and a desire to do their will, are feelings and motives which, at a certain age, seem all that we can dare to look for as habitual and predominant. Thus, while we think that the

heart is too young to feel spiritual motives, earthly motives become fixed in it by habit, and deceive the more, because they seem to have been sanctioned as right and good. We grow up, and the change in our parents and in us, hinders them from standing to us in God's place; obedience, implicit belief, and reverent love have lost their earthly object, too often without having transferred themselves to that Heavenly object on whom alone they can feel perfectly and eternally.

With the sense of right and wrong, however, still subsisting within us, even if time has lessened or destroyed our sense of obedience and trust, such as we entertained them towards our earthly parents, we now go forth upon the various scenes of life. Everywhere we hear the sense of right and wrong equally acknowledged; the whole homage of human language at any rate is paid to good. Evil is the object of universal obloquy and dislike. O safe and happy world, where all seem to be of one mind! How can any one but follow that good which all acknowledge, but shun that evil which all seem to hold infamous? So we advance, still abhorring wrong, still loving right; surely then if we are questioned, we may say, still serving God, still keeping on God's side. But what is good, and what is evil? Have we made out clearly to ourselves the full delineation of each? Is strictness of life good or evil? Is devotedness to our friends good or evil? Is submitting to wrong good or evil? Is bearing affronts good or evil? Is singularity good or evil? Before we have settled all these questions, the world settles them for us; and we know how it settles them, and by what penalties it enforces the observance of its own interpretation. Will a man make out for himself a different creed, and stake everything on the issue of it? Few are found to do so, for philosophy in these days has lost her old power, and

few will be martyrs for her truth; nay, it is not clear that she would always urge such martyrdom; the doctrine of outward compliance shown in pity or in scorn to practices which we inwardly condemn, has on merely philosophical grounds much to say in its defence. The freedom of the inward man is not encroached upon by his outward condescension to the folly which he cannot enlighten.

And then at last where are we? In private life or in public, at home or abroad, in peace or in war; what are we but followers of we know not what, of a motley thing mixed up of good and evil; expediency, and so called honour, or liberality, dividing our homage with what is acknowledged to be right, and not uncommonly supplanting its image in our minds altogether, and denying that there is any right at all, distinct from them? And thence it comes that evils are tolerated and upheld with no shame to their supporters, but much laughter against the fantastic enthusiasm which would pull them down; that practices are followed without scruple at which those taught in Christ's school shrink in horror; that eighteen hundred years are gone, and yet Christ's kingdom is not established on earth except in name; that all that men admire and love, mixed as it is, and still retaining something of good, is yet essentially earthly; that death is therefore the object of constant dread, because it cuts us off from all that we know and value; that we turn away our minds from it even if unbelief has stripped it of its greatest terrors; that decaying faculties can find no comfort but in looking back upon what is gone for ever; that truth and love, the very lights of our being, and which when united in God are the seed of life eternal, die away visibly even before we die ourselves, lost to our enfeebled minds and chilled affections; lost, and lost for ever.

What I have sketched briefly, and therefore perhaps to some obscurely, might indeed be drawn out into a long detail, following our common life into all its varieties; painting that which you will severally become in your various courses, if you do not hold fast the consciousness of God and Christ. But what strength amidst weakness, what decision amidst endless wavering, what pure singleness amidst the vain striving to please God and mammon together; what a spring of blessing to the world and of peace to ourselves; what joy in life, what hope in death, are to be found in this consciousness! The consciousness of God in Christ, God in Christ, of ourselves, living in God and to God for ever and ever redeemed, sealed, sanctified, blessed. May we not dwell on this too? for it is no less real; it is the life of Christ's people, the life of the children of God. Neither has God's promise to His Son ever failed; in every age there have been those to whom Christ has given power to become in Him God's sons also. May we look at the true picture of their life, following up this subject yet once more, and seeing what it is, and knowing that it may be ours. May we pray and labour with all our hearts that it shall be ours here and hereafter.

LECTURE XXXIX.

APPROACHING TO GOD IN CHRIST.

ROMANS vii. 24, 25.

O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THESE words, if we consider them, comprehend exactly all that I was saying in my last lecture, and all that I proposed to say to-day. For they speak of a state of death and of a state of deliverance: the state of death being that in which sin got the better of all good resolutions and occasional good actions, and of a strong consciousness of the difference between right and wrong, and of a very sincere preference of right to wrong; and the state of deliverance being that in which the mind is possessed with a lively and abiding sense of God in Christ. The state of death was the state in which a man loved right but did not love God in Christ; it was a state in which the love of right came to nothing, overborne by the strength of our evil nature; and being but an ineffectual desire, it was not the determining voice which swayed our whole nature its own way; it spoke, but spoke in vain. But the state of deliverance is that in which God and Christ, being consciously present to the human soul, give it a power which by itself it had not; and the love of right, which was a feeble and ineffectual desire, is become the love of Christ,

which makes us, so St. Paul speaks, "in all things more than conquerors."

Those who attended to the lesson from the Epistle to the Romans, which has been just read in this evening's service, will have found, with some things perhaps which they did not understand, yet much undoubtedly that is very plain and very remarkable. It is clear that St. Paul is speaking of a person loving what is good, but yet not being good; and it is plain also that he does not consider the loving good as furnishing the man with any excuse. On the contrary he describes his condition as one of certain death. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The following part of the Epistle is interrupted by the strange division of the chapters just at its beginning: in the lesson this evening we had no more of it than the exclamation, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" which is his answer to the question, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He thanks God that there is a deliverance; he thanks God through Christ; for God in and through Christ is the deliverer. But the nature of the deliverance is described more fully in the eighth chapter. The last verse of the chapter read this evening was, "So then with my mind I myself serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin;" this is the summing up of what he had been saying in the chapter, and describes once again what he had just before called the body of death. Had not the chapter been ended in the very middle of its subject, we should have seen the whole more plainly. Now, or without God in Christ, I with my mind serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin; and this is a state of death; but there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. That is to say, without God in Christ there is a part in us which loves

good, and there is a part in us which loves evil; but the love of good is the weaker, and we walk, we live, our actions and the character of our being go along with the part that loves evil. But with God and Christ there are still as before the same two parts in us, the part which loves good and the part which loves evil; but the great difference is that now the love of good is the stronger and not the weaker; and we walk, we live, our actions and the character of our being go along with the part which loves good. We walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For not according to our wishes but according to our doings are we to be judged; he is not condemned in whom there exists the tendency, the desire of evil; else could no flesh be saved: neither is he justified in whom there exists the love and desire of good, else could no flesh be counted as a sinner. The question is, which love, which desire has the mastery; whose servants are we; whose bidding do we do, is it the bidding of evil, or the bidding of good? This is the doctrine of this most important part of this great Epistle. It says that the lively consciousness of God and of Christ is victory. It pronounces the very truth to which we were coming this day as the conclusion of my two last sermons; that the security which I could most wish to see you bear with you out into life, the only security, and the certain security, was the keeping alive in your minds keenly and constantly, your own souls and God and Christ. So far the preacher's task is easy; he does but state what he finds in the Scripture, he does but utter a truth which, as a truth to be embraced by the understanding, contains in it, I think, but little difficulty. But to say how this consciousness of God and Christ is to be preserved; how we can hold fast what so many thousands, as we see, are daily letting slip; how we may make Christ our Saviour, while thousands, for whom He died no less than for us, will not

have Him for their Saviour; this question, the one great question of human life, is not so easily answered; for many answers have been given, and yet the thing has not been done; and the church was designed to furnish the answer practically; but neither has it been, or at least it is not now given in the church; and no man in this matter seems able to help his brother, nay we many times seem unable to help ourselves: and with all the promises of the Scripture before us, with God and Christ revealed to us, we yet fail to apprehend them; it is still, "With our mind we serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

Perhaps some might say, what is all this supposed difficulty; do you not know how God and Christ are to be apprehended? Have you never read, that this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith; and does not the Scripture give you the answer, in few words, to the question which you think so hard, when it says, "Believe and be saved?" So some perhaps might say to us; some, shall we call them the most blessed of all the children of men, or most unwise? most blessed surely, if with no fear of failure, with no sense of difficulty, they acquired and have ever since held fast this faith, the real true faith of God and of God's Scriptures, and not a vain counterfeit of man's devising, easy indeed to get, but when gotten utterly worthless; but if they have indeed the true faith in Christ which gives them the victory, and have nothing in them which tells them that this was hard to gain and is yet hard to keep, then they are of all men most blessed. Most blessed, but yet, it seems, not able to be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; for surely if the case be so with them, as I have supposed, shey cannot be tempted like as we are. Or shall we say that they who tell us that we have only to believe and live, are of all men the most unwise, or the most cruel? The most unwise, if they know nothing

of how much there is contained in that word "believe;" if they think not of the father, who, knowing full well that faith would do what he wanted, yet saw not how he could obtain that faith, and said even with tears in the extremity of his distress, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief;" or if they know not that faith may fail, that they, our Lord's first disciples, within an hour after they had felt that they had at last obtained faith, were yet scattered every man to his own, and left their Lord alone. We nothing doubt that faith will save us, but how to obtain and keep by us evermore this saving faith, is this indeed a question which can be answered easily, without making our answer a mere mockery? There are matters here pressing close upon us, which I must pass by now, however deep their interest, in order to come to what is more directly practical. Why salvation is so difficult, and why so many miss it, even though Christ is risen and the Holy Spirit given, is indeed an awful question; and he who well considers this, will need nothing more to convince him of the infinite falsehood of those notions about the virtue of the church and its ordinances which some are for ever inculcating; as if these gave that life, which the church was indeed intended to give, but has not given and does not give. But we have a more practical matter before us. Salvation is difficult because faith is hard to gain and hard to keep, and the church gives little real help in the hour of need. We cannot tell, nor is it our business to inquire, why it should have become so difficult; this only we can see, that our fathers' sins have increased it to us, and ours are likely to increase it to our children; and that in the meanwhile it is difficult in the highest degree; and being so difficult, we sometimes despair of ever accomplishing it, and so are lost without a struggle.

Now, first, do we feel the difficulty of obtaining faith to

consist chiefly in our understandings? I think that this is the case rarely; I do not think that our minds repel the faith either of God or of Christ. There are no doubt exceptions to this, there are persons whose intellectual difficulties are great and intensely painful; but I do not think that there are many. When we are told that God is very near to us, seeing all that we do, knowing all that we think; it is not, I think, that our understandings reject this as untrue, but that we find a difficulty somewhere or other in being impressed with its reality. We do not reject it, we do not dispute it; we admit it, but we do not in the Scripture sense of the word "believe it." The defect or the hindrance is not in our understandings; the most convincing arguments against atheism would not assist us; they would leave us where we are actually, with our understandings convinced, but not really believing. I should doubt whether there was any one in all this congregation who could not bear me witness, that to read books of evidences would not advance his state practically; that he has at present no hindrance to his faith of such a kind as they would remove. His difficulty is quite of another kind; he does not doubt that God is, but He cannot find Him. This is the common case; this would be confessed by old and young, though they might express the thing in different language. Their difficulty is how to think of God often enough, and how to think of Him strongly enough.

How to think of God often enough. Surely we can for this get certain helps if we will; we can surely each of us, say to ourselves; "I will fix certain times for prayer, or for reading a short passage from the Bible, or from some other serious book. I will fix these times, and generally speaking I can observe them; I can at any rate take care that the thought of God is presented to my mind often; no day shall pass without my turning my mind towards

Him: it is manifest that I can do this as certainly as I could fix and keep a time for doing any thing else; for my meals, or for my exercise, or for reading any common book." But we may think of Him, and not think of Him strongly. Experience shows this; that we may read the Scriptures, and not feel them; that we may come to public worship, attend with our ears, yet be really unmoved; that we may have family prayer, nay, that we may repeat our own prayers in our own words, and yet have not prayed really; that our desire did not go along with what we said. How can we get this farther step; and whenever we read of God, and whenever we pray to Him, how can we impress upon our minds all that is contained in that awful name, which our eyes and tongues and thoughts are all combining to take in vain?

Here is indeed the great difficulty; for if we say, "Pray to God the first thing of all, that He will impress your hearts with a worthy notion of what He is, that you may not read of Him or speak to Him in mockery," yet this very prayer may itself be wanting in earnestness; the very prayer in which we ask God to save us from mocking Him, may be in itself a mockery. How can we arrive at the point which we require? For in order to obtain earnestness it seems necessary that we should be earnest already. And here all that man can do is to suggest certain methods, still outward, by which our minds may be disposed to be earnest, remembering always, and confessing that faith is a gift of God, and that after all it is of Him and of His grace that we are disposed to seek, as well as are enabled to find; that we cannot by any wisdom or power, or contrivance of our own, leap over the barrier between want of faith and faith. Yet, as I said, certain methods may be used, which we shall do well to try, which God may be pleased to bless. We may think of any event

which has happened in our own family or within our knowledge of a serious and sobering kind. Can it be, that even the youngest and happiest among us have nothing of this sort which they could bring before their minds to restrain them from being for ever thoughtless? Pain, distress, sorrow, all have a tendency to make us earnest; can we find no instance of any of these which we can in any degree realize? Surely something must have occurred within our knowledge that may speak to us solemnly, and so speaking may dispose us really to pray that we may be open to such impressions more. For the instant that there is any thing like a spark kindled, prayer will flow more readily, and we should that instant have recourse to it, that God may be pleased to take His work under His care and to bless it. But we must again pause before the end of this wide subject; and if the last rule which I have been giving has any truth in it, I am not sorry to leave it with your minds that they may consider it, and if it may be, may make trial of it.

LECTURE XL.

WAITING FOR GOD IN CHRIST.

St. John xiv. 19, 20.

Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

Most perfectly does the part of the subject of my late lectures at which I am now arrived, agree and harmonize with the services of this day. That blessedness which we were seeking, that security for you and for us, for all Christ's people, for all God's creatures, that which is their life and their only life, what words can describe it better than those which I have just read as my text, and which you heard read in the Gospel this morning? "I am in my Father," says Christ, "and ye in me, and I in you." I am in you, as He explains it, "by my Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit of the Father and of the Son." Here is described the Christian's perfect state, his freedom and his safety and his victory. May God grant that it be not said of us of this blessedness as it was said to Moses of the land of Canaan: "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." Let us acknowledge where the difficulty is, as we did last Sunday. We pray, but our prayer is not a living prayer, mighty and effectual; we believe, yet we feel that we need to cry out, "Lord, help thou mine unbelief." And this step

from the cold prayer to the living, from the weak faith to the faith victorious; who shall give it us? Yet in that one step lies every thing. Surely the experience of every one of us tells us, that our salvation is not of ourselves, neither in the last place, nor in the first; we can no more of ourselves apprehend Christ risen, than we could have atoned for our own sins without Christ crucified. That the work must first and last be of God is surely no refined point in theology, but the very instinctive cry of our consciousness, when we see salvation before us, and our hand seems as it were palsied, we cannot lay hold upon it.

We are very weak, we feel that we are so: but surely it is in this condition that the Gospel promises belong to us, and we should do well to consider them. God willeth not our death but our life; there is no doubt at all of this matter, for He has given us His only-begotten Son. Be it that we are very cold to Him, be it that we are in darkness and see Him not, but at the most feel after Him dimly; what is it that the Scripture says? "God commendeth His love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And are we to take away this word clean out of the Scriptures, and make it no living word but merely one historical, that once, eighteen hundred years ago, while the men of that one generation were yet sinners, He died for them, but now He has not died except for the righteous? That in all times to come, after that one most favoured generation, the source of salvation for those who most need it is closed? That because we were brought to Christ in our infancy, and water was poured upon us, we nothing conscious of it, that therefore when we sin, our sin is that of theirs who have done despite unto God's Spirit; that when we are weak our weakness is judicial; that when we want faith, it is that we have forfeited it, and none may renew us to repentance; or if at all, yet

by a most painful and doubtful process; it is no more, "believe and live;" but, "repent therefore and pray God, if peradventure it may be forgiven thee?" If this be so, doubtless the Gospel is not present but past; it was given for one generation; for one little hour the Sun of Righteousness shone, but again the clouds closed, and with a blackness greater than ever; we are again and for ever under the law.

Most painful is it that any men should have carried their idolatry of forms to such a length as this; that they have actually taken away the Gospel, and considered that Christ's promises are to us inapplicable, because we have received baptism in our infancy, and the forgiveness once given in baptism is repeated no more. Who does not see that Christ's promises and God's solemn warnings have nothing to do with any outward forms, but with the real state of the human soul? That it is not sin after baptism which is so dangerous, but a relapse after a begun recovery, an insensibility to divine truths which once moved us, an insensibility to motives which were once powerful, a turning away in weariness from duties once practised, a turning again to sins once repented of? There is indeed a fearful time to the human soul, when its salvation is all but impossible; there is a state of sin for which St. John cannot assure us that prayer will be effectual. O remember this, ye that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you! Into this state we may fall, into this state we shall fall by continued carelessness; even before death comes, the judgment may be sure and its seal be manifest. From this state may God keep us all; from this second death, which wakes not to Christ's tidings of salvation, but to His trumpet call to judgment!

But surely to you, at your early age, surely to older persons, weak and sinful, but not, we trust, utterly hardened,

Christ is yet our Saviour. God commendeth His love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And when we pray, and pray coldly, and our faith is weak, and God is dimly seen, and the world prevails over us; then of a surety we may say and feel that for such as we are Christ died; that for us He died, that for us He rose again, that the Father loves even us for His sake, and will give us His Holy Spirit. If He tarry, wait for Him, because He will surely come, He will not tarry; strange words, it may seem, and even contradictory; but quite intelligible in this our case, and quite applicable. Wait for Him, for ye are privileged to do so; wait for Him, wait at the outer gate, though the gate may seem fast closed, and we can see nothing of the glory within: yet wait, for so Christ bids you; within that gate is your home, if you will not turn your backs upon it; wait, and it will one day be opened. But we grow tired of waiting; "seven days," so it is written, "Saul tarried according to the set time that Samuel had appointed; but Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him: and Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me and peace offerings; and he offered the burnt offering." Can any one doubt, who sees the use made of the Old Testament in the New, that St. Paul would have said of this passage, as he said of the story of Hagar and Ishmael, "These things are an allegory"? He did not mean that they are only an allegory, but that it is their allegorical and spiritual, much more than their historical sense, which most concerns us. Seven days we wait, and He who alone can sacrifice for us comes not to us sensibly; nay, He seems to linger beyond His promised time: we pray, and He has not seemed to hear; we are bound, and He has not yet delivered us; and the people are scattered from us; our strength for the battle seems not to gain, but rather to be lessened; our deliverance is in

worse case than ever. And then we are tired of waiting, and we try to offer our own sacrifice; in some way or other, the ways are infinitely various, we try to help ourselves; be it by idolatry, be it by unbelief; bowing down to the form or the ceremony, and trusting to the priest's efficacy or the saints', or else saying that none of all these things are needed, that God will forgive our weakness, that mortal sins cannot lead to an immortal penalty. So it is that we offer our own sacrifice, such as we think will most serve our purpose, but we will no longer wait for Him who can alone redeem us. This is the one great lesson to press upon you, "wait for Christ." Wait patiently, if your prayers are cold, if your faith is weak, if your sins are many; still wait and watch, pray still, believe amidst unbelief; watch your lives and struggle with your sins, amidst your constant defeats. This is the state of him who through much tribulation enters into the kingdom of God; in your very disappointment, in your perseverance, in your hoping against hope, lies your victory; or rather the sign of your victory, the sign that you are Christ's people. Only wait and be not weary, for the night will come to an end at last.

And can any tongue adequately describe the joy, when they who so watch at last behold the dawn? Not the sun — he is not yet risen,— but the gracious dawn. Most touching is the natural dawn at this summer season, when the forms of things first, and then their colours begin to appear to us; and there is a stillness over every thing, a freshness yet a calmness inexpressible, the preparation as it were for the brightness of the full day. It is a true image of the spiritual dawn to them who have been long waiting. That is the dawn when prayer becomes welcome, when God begins to be realized to our minds, when we think of Him as our loving Father, and so begin to feel towards Him as

His children. This is the dawn; not the day, for that may still be distant; the sun arises, when the beasts of the field get them away together, and lay them down in their dens, when evil haunts us no more, and Christ is seen face to face. But the dawn brightening more and more unto the perfect day,—that is the Christian's course when he is truly Christ's, when he waits and is not weary. And what is their life on whom the dawn has so risen? May we not dwell upon it; enlarging only the description which is given in the text, and which virtually includes, and more than includes, all that can be said in unfolding it?

"The world seeth me no more, but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also." For a long time we saw Him not, any more than the world saw Him; but now it is the dawn. What is it to have Christ become no more a name, nor a person of whom we read in the Bible, and who was on earth long ago; but One ever living, ever close to us, ever loving us, ever gracious unto us; the friend and the brother,—the words are permitted to us in the Scripture, —the friend and the brother of the youngest and of the eldest; who can feel for the griefs and for the weaknesses of us all? We see Him that He is really alive; alive at God's right hand, with all power in heaven and in earth; and because He lives we live also. Not a perfect life, in which there is no death nor any thing like death; but we begin to feel that we too are not wholly dead, that there is a spiritual life in us also, derived from our communion with Christ; that we know what it is to forgive, what it is to be patient, what it is to deny ourselves, what it is to believe, and to hope, and to love. These are life, or the seeds of life, at any rate, they will be ripened when the sun is risen; but they are quickened, they live under the dawn. Christ's Spirit is consciously within us, we are not perfectly but in some degree, not always, yet surely sometimes, spiritually minded.

"At that day," our Lord says further, "At that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." You can see the words in the Bible; indeed they are there;—this promise, all gracious as it is, rising it might seem beyond the portion of humanity;—our blessed Lord did speak them, and His beloved disciple, St. John, who himself heard them, has recorded them. "Ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." When we feel spiritual life within us, then our eyes are more and more opened, and we know where we are. When our first parents sinned, it is said that their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked; they whose eyes are opened by the growth of spiritual life within them, know that they are not naked, not forsaken, not poor, not miserable; but clothed upon, and redeemed, and rich, and happy; that God is around them on every side; that they are—it may be spoken in no other words than in Christ's own—that "they are in Him and He in them." This they know with an assured belief, with what may be called an actual consciousness; the world is now possessed as it were by God, and filled by Him altogether; the world is filled by God, and so are their own hearts besides.

And where is danger then, or uncertain walking; whether we are to pass our days at home or abroad; in public life or in private, in one profession or in another; whether the voice of dispute is raging around us, or error reigns without dispute all but triumphant; is not our path plain and sure, and does it not lead straight to heaven? Therefore wait for Christ; not carelessly, or as men asleep, but wait and watch. This day speaks of the first descent of the Holy Spirit, when He came as the Spirit of power to bear witness to Christ outwardly; but the text in the Gospel speaks also of another descent, and more abiding and more perfect; not of the Holy Spirit of power only, but of

the Holy Spirit alike of power, and of wisdom, and of love. This is our great and precious promise; in the certain hope of attaining to this, we are to watch and to wait. Therefore be of good courage, as many of you as are waiting but have not yet seen the dawn; who pray, but pray with effort; who believe, yet are full of unbelief. Still pray, and still believe, and still watch; turn not back; do not give up the point whereunto you have attained, but abide there with anxious patience. Watch your lives carefully, weed out whatever sin you can observe; this is the proof that you are in earnest, and not liars to God and to yourselves; but wait and pray for Christ to appear, and to establish you with His righteousness, and to grant you to live consciously because He lives, and to know that He is in the Father, and you in Him, and He in you.

A PRAYER,

WRITTEN FOR THE EVENING OF WHIT-SUNDAY.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, in whom alone is man's strength, from whom all good things come to us, the will to please Thee, and the power to fulfil it; look down upon us Thy servants here assembled before Thee at the end of this Thy holy day, and suffer not that which we have heard with our ears, or read with our eyes this day, to have been heard or read in vain. O Lord Jesus Christ, of whose only grace it cometh that Thy outward ordinances are profitable to our souls, grant that Thy holy communion, of which some of us have been this day partakers, may be to them an abiding blessing: that through Thy Holy Spirit work-

ing in them and with them, it may become a real and lasting communion with Thee. Put it into our hearts to think of Thee sometimes amidst the stir of our daily life; and when the thought has come to us, O save us from the sin of turning away from it; but make us to follow it readily, and to cherish it, and by it to try what we are doing, whether we are doing it according to Thy will or no.

If we should wickedly put such good thoughts from us, and grieve Thy Holy Spirit; yet, O Lord! of Thy great mercy do not leave us quite to ourselves, to take our own hard and careless way, but by any means whatever, yea, even by chastisements grievous to be borne, do Thou save us from the sleep of death, and let us hear Thy call once again.

And O, gracious Father, who willest not the death of a sinner, nor that any one who would turn to Thee should be driven to despair; be pleased of Thy mercy, whenever Thou dost awaken us, to stand before us not as a God of judgment only, but as a God of salvation. Put it into our hearts that Thou art the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that Thou didst give Him for us all, that our sins might be blotted out for His sake.

Let the thought of Thy mercy to us in Thy beloved Son fill us with a true and living faith; strong and victorious over all our sins and all our temptations. Grant, that keeping this faith we may not turn from Thee in fear, but may come before Thee boldly, according to Thy will, crying Abba, Father.

To Thee are known all our weaknesses and all our dangers; more than any words of ours can speak, Thine eye seeth in us. Have mercy upon us, and be with us one and all; be with old and young alike, strengthening each according to his need, and bringing us more and more into the faith and love of Thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

LECTURE XLI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ENEMIES.

PSALM cxliii. 12.

And of thy goodness slay mine enemies, and destroy all them that vex my soul; for I am thy servant.

In the different parts of this day's service we see a good example of that variety in the Scripture which is one of its most precious properties, making it indeed that universal help and guide which we believe it to be. Compare, for instance, this 143d Psalm, which is one of those read this evening, with the portion from St. John which was read this morning as the Epistle. Compare St. John's language, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love; compare this with the Psalmist's, "for the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath laid me in the darkness as the men that have been long dead;" or with his earnest prayer, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." Now when we read these things thoughtfully and in earnest, and begin to apply what we read to ourselves, then we feel thankful for this rich variety, because we find that in it there is something that suits our particular case now, as well as something which points out that more perfect state to which we may arrive hereafter.

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And if whilst speaking of this property in the Scripture, I may follow up this point a little further, how perfect is the mercy shown to our weaknesses in those recorded words of our Lord upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" For as His other language is so fitted to assure us that He is a Saviour mighty to save, as when He says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;" or again, "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again;"—so when we think of our own infinite weakness, there arises perhaps the thought, that death is to us a very different thing from what it was to Him, that the waves may overwhelm us, although he walked on them unharmed. When we feel ourselves full of fear, and cannot discern God's presence in the dark valley, our case seems very unlike to His, who had set God always before Him, who declared that when His disciples forsook Him, He was not alone, because the Father was with Him. To find Him therefore not sparing to taste of all the bitterness of death, to hear Him uttering the words of a troubled soul, and saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me;" although into the mystery of those words so said by Him we may not dare to penetrate, still offers us comfort unspeakable; and assures us that, sin alone excepted, He was in all things tempted like as we are; that in all our affliction He was afflicted also.

But to return to my immediate subject. When we hear St. John's language, declaring that perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; although we acknowledge its truth and admire its loftiness; yet the contrast which it affords to our own state is perhaps almost fearful. For some of us, it may be, fear God very little; and also love Him very little; and some of us, it may be, love Him as

far as they dare, and fear Him very much; and some perhaps love Him very much, and fear Him less than they love Him. But the state of such love as casts out all fear, seems to us, if I know what our state commonly is, a degree of perfection almost too high to hope for. It is true that it is the feeling of a child to his parent when perfected; we have seen it, have known what it is in our earthly relations; the love to a parent is sometimes quite above all fear of displeasing him; the consciousness of love towards him is so deep in the heart, that we feel it impossible that we should give him pain; that any willing act of ours should bring a shade over his brow as if we had ever for a moment been undutiful or unkind towards him. But so to feel towards God, seems, as I said, to be a perfection of blessedness almost too great for humanity.

But now let us turn to the language of others of God's servants, and see if they had all attained to so high a pitch; if nothing of fear, nothing of struggle, was at any time mingled with their faith. And here surely the Psalms are a comfort unspeakable, for there we find God's servants in trouble, in darkness, in great fear, praying earnestly, yet seeming to have received as yet no answer to their prayers. We find them beset with enemies, who were getting the mastery over them, and were well nigh driving them to despair; and yet surely we are not obliged to say, nay, may we not very confidently hope the contrary? that these servants of God so struggling, so beset with enemies, so downcast, so fearful, were all finally vanquished, that they were cast down and were never any more able to stand. We may hope surely the very opposite to this, that they were holden up: for God was able to make them stand. And thus we do feel, I think, a real comfort in reading their language so answering to our

own; it gives us a hope that as they shared our trouble, so we may share also their victory.

Is it necessary here to stop for an instant, in order to prevent a very shocking misunderstanding? Must I say in so many words that nothing which has been spoken is intended to be, or can be in any degree, a comfort to those who neither love God, nor yet fear Him? When I speak of the great variety of the Scripture, of the different sorts of language used by God's servants in different parts of it, I would not be understood to mean, that amidst all this variety, amidst all this different language, there is to be found anything answering to the condition of those who live with no feeling towards God at all. Such persons are not and cannot be among God's servants: their place is amongst His enemies. No Psalmist, nor Prophet, nor Apostle has spoken or written like these; they speak the language of remorse, of repentance, of great fear, of great distress; but never the language of hardness and indifference. Between us and them, if we neither love God nor yet fear Him, there is, in the words of this morning's Gospel, a great gulph fixed; they cannot come to us, nor we go to them for ever. But surely we need not be speaking to those who will not hear; what good is there in addressing ourselves to ears perfectly closed, to hearts which think of nothing, and love nothing but themselves and their own pleasure? If such as these are ever to be touched, it will scarcely be by any preaching of man's: God himself can alone in His good time find the way to their hearts: by troubles of some kind or another saying to them, in a voice not to be disputed, Ye shall think, ye shall not enjoy; and till he does so, vain are all words of man, and vain are all ordinary means of grace: these persons are amongst God's people, but not really of them;

what is said of the struggles, and fears and hopes of God's servants, is to them as words spoken to the air.

I am speaking, and I have been speaking, to those, and surely there are many such amongst us, who listen to what is said with more than mere curiosity; who know that, whether my words be impressive or unimpressive, right or wrong, still the matter to which they relate is the great matter of their lives; that God's favour and God's love are real things of infinite value, that they have souls which can know God and love Him, or must else pine for ever in a living death without Him. Some there are surely to whom it is not wholly without interest that another week of irreparable time has passed away since we were last assembled here: who watch themselves to see whether in that week they have in any way advanced in their course or no. And because it may happen that such persons may seek God long and may not find Him, and there is the greatest danger of their being discouraged and giving up their efforts altogether, because it is darkness with them, and they see no dawn, therefore I have wished to speak to them words of encouragement; to assure them that their struggle is one which holy men have often undergone; to conjure them that they go on with patience, that they still keep steadily stemming the stream, not relaxing their efforts, although it may be that as yet they make no progress.

Nor is it unfit to call to their recollection such passages as the text, where the Psalmist says to God, "And of thy goodness slay mine enemies, and destroy all them that vex my soul." We have nothing to do with the historical sense of these and other like passages: it is not and cannot be in their historical and human meaning that the Psalms are the perpetual storehouse of prayer and thanksgiving for the people of God in every age. But the spiritual mean-

ing of these words expresses an eternal truth, which we should do ill not to remember. We have enemies, we have those that vex our soul; the Psalmist spoke a language, which every one of God's servants may echo; and these enemies are bringing our life every day nigh into hell. Did St. Paul mean any thing or nothing when he said, our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the princes of this world's darkness, against evil spirits not confined in the great deep, but ranging at will in this upper world? Did St. Peter mean any thing or nothing when he said, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour?" These words have in them nothing to make them appear like a mere figure of speech; they seem spoken earnestly by men who believed them to be at once true and important. They may indeed be corrupted into superstition, but as they stand in themselves they are not superstitious. But they are of importance, because we see that if we are indolent or slumbering, we have an enemy who is wakeful; that as we hope for the help of God's Spirit, so we have against us the power of the spirit of evil; that with a working mysterious indeed, and incomprehensible, as is the working of God's Spirit no less, yet with a fruit clearly manifest, there is an influence busy in undoing every work of grace in our souls, in driving away every thought of penitence or of love, in instigating every evil desire, in deepening every fit of spiritual slumber. Indeed it is no unmeaning prayer, "Of thy goodness slay mine enemies, and destroy all them that vex my soul." It is the prayer of our Litany, that it may please our Lord, "to strengthen such as do stand, and to comfort and help the weak-hearted, and to raise up them that fall, and finally to beat down Satan under our feet." The need

which we have of this prayer makes it no less needful that our labour and our watchfulness should be in proportion to it. What has been said now, and what I have said in several preceding lectures, has gone upon this supposition, which I not only hope, but believe to be a true one, that amongst the whole number of you whom I see before me, there are always some, God only knows who they are and how many, but there are some, who even at their young age, and amidst the occupations and amusements of their life here, which veil God altogether from the eyes of many, do yet believe truly that it is their one business to come to Him, and to find Him, and to walk with Him all their days. But neither do they find their path merely easy, nor is God clearly realized to them. On the contrary, they struggle on, as I think, amidst great difficulties and frequent relapses; sometimes they feel themselves hardened; sometimes utterly careless; sometimes wholly indolent; often ashamed, often discouraged, doing what they would not, not doing what they would. For any human being so situated, how can we help feeling sympathy? For any young person in such a state our sympathy must be still greater; for a young person for whom we are responsible, whose success or failure may be helped or hindered by what we do or leave undone, the feeling becomes so strong, that I can scarce conceive a stronger. Therefore it is natural to think much of their case, to urge them to go on, in spite of all discouragements; to assure them that they suffer nothing which God's servants have not suffered before; to confess plainly that the way is narrow which leadeth to life, that the adversaries are many, that many a weary day must be passed before we can sit down at the end of our journey safe and blessed. It is natural to repeat the same things over and over again, seeing that they concern them so infinitely; natural to speak of the

helps of our way no less than of its hindrances; natural surely, most natural, to speak of Him in whose love we are authorized, nay, commanded to trust; who died for us and rose again; who watches over us, when we think we are most forsaken; who calls us to come to Him, assuring us that in Him is peace, and safety, and strength, and victory. And as I began, so I may end, repeating that in Him we have those three points which I spoke of, which if we keep we are safe, and if we lose them, or any of them, we are ourselves lost; our own souls, and Christ and God. Blessed then are they who struggle and they who fear; for such know and feel that they have souls; and that those souls need a Saviour; and that that Saviour brings them to God. Blessed are they who feel and fear their spiritual enemies; for they who feel them, resist; and they who resist, conquer. Blessed are they whilst they fear and whilst they struggle; but most miserable if they do neither the one nor the other; resigned to evil, blinded by the world; submitting themselves to the yoke of their nature, and going on to the end of that nature which is death.

LECTURE XLII.

THE FAREWELL WARNING.

2 Corinthians iv. 3.

If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

So St. Paul wrote before he had passed the middle of his apostolical course; before that time when he had to regret a more general defection of the church, a fuller proof that the word which he had preached was to many spoken in vain. But he saw already, nay, he must have seen from the beginning, that to some his gospel was hidden; that Christ whom he had declared to be to those who believed the power of God and the wisdom of God, was to some neither power nor wisdom; they heard and were neither enlightened nor saved. What St. Paul saw from the beginning of the gospel, has been seen ever since; still the truth is set before men, and they reject it; or, stranger still, they say that they receive it, while in fact they are all the while rejecting it. This is a pain which all ministers of Christ must feel, but yet it cannot be doubted that, in proportion to the closeness of the relation between the several members of any particular church or congregation, this pain becomes greater. In a large parish, where a man scarcely knows all his parishioners by sight; where his intercourse even with those whom he knows best, is confined to occasional visits; so many influences are at work on their minds over which he can have no control, that if the truths which he sets before

ing in them and with them, it may become a real and lasting communion with Thee. Put it into our hearts to think of Thee sometimes amidst the stir of our daily life; and when the thought has come to us, O save us from the sin of turning away from it; but make us to follow it readily, and to cherish it, and by it to try what we are doing, whether we are doing it according to Thy will or no.

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What we are most tempted to do in this case is, on every occasion like the present, to put this strongly before you; to conjure those who will be coming forward to fill the places left vacant by others, that they consider how much is thus made to depend on them. But then we feel as the Apostle felt, that there are some to whom Christ's gospel is hidden; we know but too well how small is the virtue of mere words; that it is easy to call, but not so easy to make the call effectual. We know that the same word of God set before different minds in the very same manner, is powerful with some, utterly powerless upon others. So that again we seem as it were paralyzed; the danger is before us manifest; what would be the remedy is no less plain, but if we proceed to offer it, we know that from causes utterly beyond our power to deal with, some will accept it, some, and must we not say *many?* will refuse it.

What remains, then, but that we should, all of us of every age who have any serious thoughts about this matter, any interest in the real welfare of the school, that we should commit it earnestly to God in our prayers, beseeching Him to do what man cannot, to "turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," to grant that they to whom Christ's gospel is hidden, shall at any rate not be the majority.

But surely, while committing the event to Him wholly in whose hand are the hearts of us all, we yet should pray no less that He would dispose us to be His instruments; that He would give us a hearty zeal, and also a wisdom to guide our zeal, and a perseverance which will not let us be weary in well-doing; that He would keep alive in our minds our Lord's words, that while offences must come, yet it is woe to him by whom they come; that so we who really seek to follow Christ, whether we be old or young,

may be clear from the blood of all men, that whatever evil shall continue to exist among us, may not be through our fault, whether by neglect or by actual encouragement of it. Least of all should we forget, whether young or old, that our Lord, when purposing to commit to Peter a high charge in His Church, told him that He had first prayed for himself that his own faith should not fail, and then He added, "being converted, strengthen thy brethren." And so let us all be sure, that the first and best way by which we can strengthen others, is to be converted ourselves; that every pains bestowed with God's help upon our own hearts and lives, is sure to tell upon those of others, most effectually to them, and by far most blessedly to us. We can have no hope, nay, there is something shocking in the very thought that we can do good to others while we are careless about ourselves. On the other hand, if we feel ourselves too humble or too weak to allow us ever to think that we can do good to others, yet in fact our mere care of ourselves is doing it in the best way, and certainly with no offence against humility even in the youngest. I should seem to be speaking in mockery, if I called upon any of the very young to try to improve the school in any other manner. But surely I may call upon the very youngest here to improve himself; I may call upon him to pray to God to keep his own soul from evil, and to encourage him in every thing that is good. And I can tell him that if he does this, let him be as young as he will, he will most certainly do good to more than himself only; he may be of service to the school more than the oldest of us, who were to say, and do not.

Some there are in every society to whom such words as I have been saying are altogether superfluous; God has blessed them with His grace so highly that they follow Him as by the very instinct of their natures. And others there

are also for the most part, God grant that they be not many, to whom such words are certainly useless; the heart is like the hard road-side, and not a single grain of the seed of life can enter it. But the great mass everywhere, and surely no less here, consists of neither of these two classes; but of persons so balanced as it were between good and evil as to the future, so mixed up of good and evil elements now, that the very doubtfulness of the issue makes their case full of interest; and no eye of man can dare to prophesy what may be the decision at last. How many of this sort do I see before me, with regard to whom hope and fear are all but equal. What may be the effect produced upon those by the approaching vacation? Will they return equally undecided as they are now; to be determined by such influences as shall happen to prevail amongst us when we meet again; or will the turn be taken before, and will they return positive elements of good or of evil? Surely your prayers for yourselves were never more needed, that the turn may be taken without delay, and that it may be taken for good.

I have kept to general language, and I think it is generally best to do so. I have little faith in the efficacy of particular warnings against such and such particular faults. Such warnings would indeed be very useful if the faults were things which you did not know to be wrong; then of course it is right and indeed necessary that our language should be particular; our preaching in that case might and ought to resemble actual teaching. But such faults as I should be most inclined to name, you all know to be faults already; however lightly you may practise, or regard in others the practice, of any particular evil, you do not really act or feel thus from ignorance that God judges differently. There is scarcely a bad practice or a notion tolerated among you, even of those which you

maintain most vigorously, of which you are not perfectly aware that they are not according to the mind of Christ; and therefore I am not either anxious to urge that such and such things are sins, which you know of your selves, or to urge you to turn away from them as such, which would be pressing upon you a motive to which you might not yet be alive; but I would far rather call upon you to come to Christ with all your hearts, to learn what it is to pray to Him, to trust in Him, to live to Him, to take the great step in life of deciding between life and death, between Christ and Satan; in one word, to embrace the Gospel. Then there would be little need to speak to you of particular sins; those which were most in your way would be to yourselves at once the principal objects of your anxiety; you would know that there lay your struggle. To realize your baptism, or your confirmation which represented your baptism consciously to each of you, that is I think, to all of us, the one thing needful. It is a true word in every sense, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin; to come to Him is life, to go on without Him is death. I know that the form of evil may vary with circumstances, it may be at one time drunkenness, at another time extravagance, at another time sin of another kind, nor do I doubt that to your worldly prospects, and to the worldly prosperity and reputation of this school, some sins may be more dangerous than others. But to your own souls, and to the real influence of this place for good or for evil, these differences are but trifling; it matters but little by what particular path any individual soul makes its way to death eternal, when all tend thither alike. The real point which concerns us all is not whether our sin be of one kind or of another; more or less venial, or more or less mischievous in men's judgment, and to our worldly interests; but whether we struggle against all sin

because it is sin; whether we have, or have not, placed ourselves consciously under the banner of our Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in Him, cleaving to Him, feeding on Him by faith daily; and so resolved, and continually renewing our resolution, to be His faithful servants and soldiers to our lives' end. To this I would call you all, so long as I am permitted to speak to you; to this I do call you all, and especially all who are likely to meet here again after a short interval; that you may return Christ's servants, with a believing and a loving heart; and if this be so, I care little as to what particular form temptations from without may take; there will be a security within, a security not of man, but of God.

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